

# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

*or* AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order  
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



**August 2017**

Vol. 122, No. 8

₹ 15.00

# THE ROAD TO WISDOM

## SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON *Steps to Realisation VI*

The great truths about atoms, and the finer elements, and the fine perceptions of men, were discovered ages ago by men who never saw a telescope, or a microscope, or a laboratory. How did they know all these things? It was through the heart; they purified the heart. It is open to us to do the same today; it is the culture of the heart, really, and not that of the intellect that will lessen the misery of the world. Artificial wants have been created; and every poor man, whether he has money or not, desires to have those wants satisfied, and when he cannot, he struggles and dies in the struggle. This is the result. Through the intellect is not the way to solve the problem of misery, but through the heart. If all this vast amount of effort had been spent in making men purer, gentler, more forbearing, this world would have a thousand-fold more happiness than it has today. Always cultivate the heart; through the heart the Lord speaks, and through the intellect you yourself speak. We must always approach the study of religion with that reverent attitude. He who comes with a pure heart and a reverent attitude, his heart will be opened; the doors will be open for him, and he will see the truth. If you come with intellect only, you can have a little intellectual gymnastics, intellectual theories, but not truth. Truth has such a face that anyone who sees that face becomes



convinced. The sun does not require any torch to show it; the sun is self-effulgent. If truth requires evidence, what will evidence that evidence? If something is necessary as witness for truth, where is the witness for that witness? We must approach religion with reverence and with love, and our heart will stand up and say, this is truth, and this is untruth. True religion is entirely transcendental. Every being that is in the universe has the potentiality of transcending the senses; even the little worm will one day transcend the senses and reach God. No life will be a failure; there is no such thing as failure in the universe. A hundred times man will hurt himself, a thousand times he will tumble, but in the end he will realize that he is God. We know there is no progress in a straight line. Every soul moves, as it were, in a circle, and will have to complete it, and no soul can go so low but there will come a time when it will have to go upwards.

From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2016), 1.404-06.

**Vol. 122, No. 8**  
**August 2017**

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**A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order  
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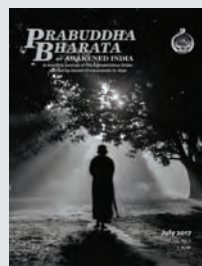
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### **The Universal Temple of Bhagwan Shri Ramakrishna (Under Construction) An earnest Appeal for generous donations**

Dear Sir / Madam,

Please accept our greetings and best wishes.

Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Aurangabad located on Swami Vivekananda Marg (Beed Bypass) is a branch center affiliated to Headquarters, Belur Math (near Kolkata). This ashrama is conducting various service activities in the field of health, education, child welfare, as well as spreading spiritual message of eternal religion as propounded by Shri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

This ashrama has taken up a new project of erecting a temple of Shri Ramakrishna. The work was commenced in December 2009 and is expected to be completed by the end of 2017.

The temple will be a unique and imposing monumental structure of its kind in entire Marathwada region in general and Aurangabad city in particular. It will add a cultural and spiritual dimension to the historical city of Aurangabad. It will be a great attraction and a place for worship, prayer, meditation and inspiration for the local people. It is also expected that the good number of general public visiting Aurangabad city as tourists for visiting world heritage sites such as Ellora & Ajanta and pilgrims for visiting Ghrishneshwar Jyotirling, Shirdi, Paithan etc. will include visit to the temple in their itinerary. It is aimed for the benefit of one and all without distinction of caste, creed, and nationality.

The estimated cost of the entire project is Rs. 20 Crores. So far Rs. 15.00 Crores have been spent through public contribution. The balance amount of Rs. 05.00 Crores is needed to complete the construction of the Temple.

**We earnestly appeal to you to donate generously for this noble cause. Your support will indeed go a long way in our endeavor to erect this magnificent architectural edifice in the memory of Shri Ramakrishna who was the unique harmonizer of all the religions of the world and who dedicated his life to bring peace and welfare of mankind.**

**We value your help and co- operation immensely.**

Yours in the service of the Lord,

*Vishnupadananda*

**(Swami Vishnupadananda)  
Secretary**

**Temple Dimensions : Length: 156 ft. Breadth: 076 ft. Height: 100 ft.**  
**Temple Construction Area : 18000 Sq.ft.**  
**Garbhagriha : 24ft. x 24ft.**  
**Temple Hall for Prayer and Meditation : 70ft. x 40ft. Seating Capacity - 450**  
**Auditorium (Ground Floor) : 80ft. x 57ft. Seating Capacity - 500**  
**The entire Temple will be built in Chunar sandstone and interior in Ambaji and Makarana marble. Ceiling of the Temple Hall will be done in Teak Wood**  
**Estimated Cost : Rs. 20 Crores**



Model of the Proposed New Temple



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# TRADITIONAL WISDOM

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।  
**Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!**

## Maitrayaniya Upanishad

August 2017  
Vol. 122, No. 8

### मैत्रायणीयोपनिषत्

शश्वत् सूयमानात् सूर्यः सवनात् सविताऽऽदानादादित्यः पवनात् पावनोऽथापोप्यायनादित्येवं ह्याह ।  
खल्वात्मनोऽत्मा नेतामृताख्यश्चेता मन्ता गन्तोत्स्रष्टानन्दयिता कर्ता वक्ता रसयिता घ्राता द्रष्टा श्रोता  
स्पृशति च विभुर्विग्रहे सन्निविष्टा इत्येवं ह्याह अथ यत्र द्वैतीभूतं विज्ञानं तत्र हि शृणोति पश्यति  
जिघ्रति रसयति चैव स्पर्शयति सर्वमात्मा जानीतेति यत्राद्वैतीभूतं विज्ञानं कार्यकारणकर्मनिर्मुक्तं  
निर्वचनमनौपम्यं निरूपाख्यं किं तदवाच्यं ।

॥६.७॥

*Shashvat suyamanavat suryah savanat savita'danat-adityah pavanat pavano'tha-apopyanad-ityevam hyaha. Khalvatmano'tma netamritakhyashcheta manta gantotsrashtanandayita karta vakta rasayita ghrata drashta shrota sprishati cha vibhur-vigrabe sannivishtha ityevam hyaha atha yatra dvaitibhutam vijnanam tatra hi shrinoti pashyati jighrati rasayati chaiva sparshayati sarvamatma janiteti yatradvaitibhutam vijnanam karya-karana-karma-nirmuktam nirvachanam-anaupamyam nirupakhyam kim tad-avachyam.*

(6.7)

Surya is so named because of the continued squeezing out, Savitri is so named because of its bringing forth. Aditya is so named because of taking up into itself. Pavana is so named because it purifies. Apa is so named because of its causing to grow. For it has been said: 'Indeed, the self of one's self is called the leader, immortal, perceiver, thinker, the goer, the evacuator, the delighter, the doer, the speaker, the taster, the smeller, the seer, the hearer, and the one who touches. He, the all-pervading, has entered the body.' For it has been said: 'Now, where knowledge is of a dual nature, there indeed, one hears, sees, smells, tastes, and touches; the self knows everything. Where knowledge is non-dual, devoid of effect, cause, or action, unspeakable, incomparable, indescribable, what is that? It is impossible to say.'

(6.7)



# THIS MONTH

**W**HAT DOES IT MEAN to have plenty and how does it affect us? Is it a problem and if it is, what is the solution? Mind is the cause and the crucial factor of this problem and needs to be controlled as explained in **The Problem of Plenty**.

We are extremely sorry to announce the **Mahasamadhi of Srimat Swami Atmasathanandaji Maharaj**, the fifteenth President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission on 18 June 2017.

Huston Smith was a noted religious studies scholar and an admirer of Swami Vivekananda. He pioneered many efforts at interreligious understanding. He passed away on 30 December 2016. Swami Chetanananda, minister-in-charge of the Vedanta Society of St Louis, Missouri, remembers this great scholar and his association with him in **In Memoriam: Huston Smith**.

The cultural histories of India and China have been following a similar course. However it is surprising and sad that these two cultures have not had much of an interaction in the recent past. The relation of these two cultures is explored in **The Cultural Heritage of India** by Zhu Wenxin, Associate Professor, Department of Social Science, China Academy of Art, Hangzhou, Zhejiang, China. His original Chinese has been translated into English by George C H Sun, President, Thomé H Fang Institute Mobile, AL, USA and Sandra A Wawrytko, Director, Center for Asian and Pacific Studies, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA, USA.

Swami Saradeshananda was an illumined

beacon among the disciples of Sri Sarada Devi. His spiritual wisdom and insight have inspired the lives of countless spiritual aspirants. Swami Shuklatmananda, a monk at Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Haridwar, served Swami Saradeshananda for ten years from 1978 to 1988 in Vrindavan. He shares with the readers his precious and blissful experiences in the holy company of Swami Saradeshananda in the fourth instalment of **Gems of Memories: Reminiscences of Swami Saradeshananda**.

Swami Sandarshanananda, a monk at Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur, Kolkata, in the seventh instalment of **Saga of Epic Proportions**, shows how Sister Nivedita was a crusader of Swami Vivekananda.

Many wonderful nuggets of wisdom contained in ancient scriptures are difficult to understand. In *Balabodha*, such ancient wisdom is made easy. This month's topic is **Shravana**. Understanding this word is necessary to understand this process, which is the important first step of spiritual life.

We should be ready to give up everything, even our life, for the sake of the country. This is depicted in the story **Shatamanyu: The Great Sacrificer**. This story is this month's *Traditional Tales* and has been translated from the Tamil book *Arulneri Kathaigal*.

Andrew Jason Cohen, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia, USA has written the book **Toleration**. From this book, we bring you this month's *Manana*.



# *The Problem of Plenty*

THE HUMAN MIND constantly seeks supports, both internal and external. Internally, the mind generates thoughts for ensuring its existence. Externally, the mind holds on to objects, people, positions, fame, and a general good feeling about life and this universe. If one is unable to achieve something really beneficial for others, one revels in the abysmal levels one drops to, just to prove one's excellence, albeit in the wicked way. This habit of the mind to hold on to internal and external support leads us to the problem of plenty.

The problem of plenty has two aspects: the internal and the external. Let us first see the external problem. We humans want to acquire things. In the beginning, it is a need, which gradually gets transformed into a desire, a craving for hoarding things. One mobile phone is necessity; more than that is a craving. Again, necessity is not universal. What could be a need for a rich person could be a luxury for a person with average wealth. This shows that surplus increases one's craving to acquire more and more things. The logic that desire for acquiring things gets subsided if one has many possessions does not seem to work in real life. One who is satisfied with ordinary food does not find any necessity to go for fancy cuisine. Conversely, one who is always eating exotic food is disturbed even if a single dish is repeated in a month.

Ease of access increases one's dependence on grabbing plenty of everything. One feels handicapped if one has an ordinary car even though

having the means to buy a luxury car. But, a person, for whom the possible means of transport ends with a two-wheeler, the ability to buy a car

---

**If plenitude was a necessary condition, none would have subsisted on earth.**

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is indeed a luxury. The more one feels the need for getting the support of other people, the more one goes on a spree to increase the number of friends. People post fake identities on social networking websites to get in touch with more and more numbers of virtual friends. The seemingly countless choices in buying a product given by the Internet has only led to people going for different models and brands of the same product. Objects of use that were used for decades, till some decades ago, now suddenly become redundant in some months.

We are increasingly losing the ability to be happy with less. 'Less is more' is today more a fashion statement than it is closer to reality. The very thought that it is possible to have more, and particularly when one thinks that this is possible with minimum effort, makes it impossible to be happy with less. Life apparently moves in a game of percentages. One acquires roughly at a constant percentage of what one already has. That is why it is possible for everyone to take care of basic food, shelter, and clothing, if a basic level of income is earned. If plenitude was a necessary condition, it would have been impossible for anyone to subsist on earth.


Plenitude does not bring satisfaction,

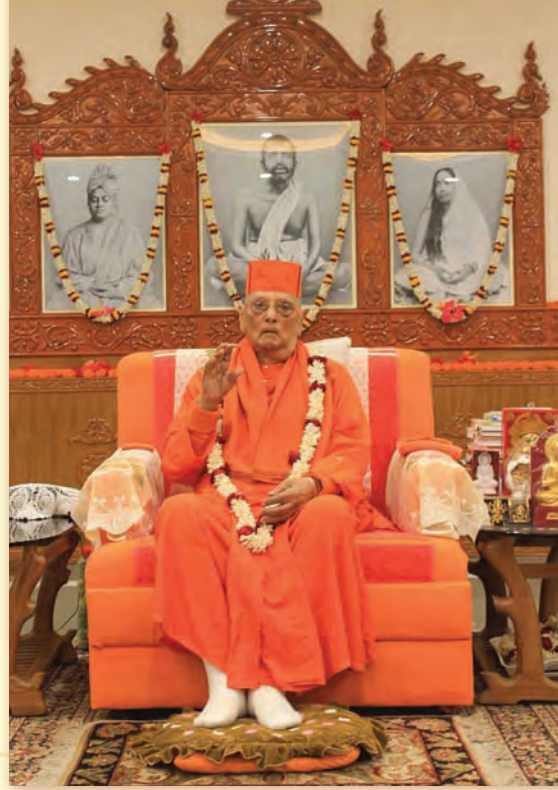
struggle does. The most important aspect of the problem of plenty is internal. It is the mind which seeks the support of many. One dreams of possessing before one actually does. One has already bought a car once one has desired it. The physical counterpart of physically buying it, the action of buying itself, does not matter as much. In that sense, the problem of plenty is not just a problem of the wealthy. The present problem of plenty is not so much a problem of inequitable wealth distribution as much it is a problem of the opening up of possibilities because of human growth, the external advancement. Several decades ago, a rural farmer was content with what one could buy, but today that farmer is discontent with what one cannot buy. Where did the change happen? In the possibility of what could have been bought. A kid would happily go to bed hungry, if it is known that there is nothing to eat at home. But, a kid who has been denied food available at home would curse the perpetrators and would go sleepless. So, the problem of plenty is a problem essentially of the mind.

The problem of plenty is an obstacle to human development. That necessity is the mother of invention is not just an adage. Only when cloistered in a long, dark tunnel, does one seek the opening to light. With plenty of alternatives to choose from, the natural creative spark inherent in everyone loses its edge. This is evident from the phenomenon of 'resource curse' seen in countries with more than adequate resources and yet having stagnant or even negative growth rates. Even in economics, an abundance of resources is known to reduce the motivation for developing or acquiring further resources. The interest rates for deposits with banks are very low in countries with much money in circulation, as the banks cannot lend money as the market does not need more money. Similarly,

humans lose the advantage of the 'giraffe effect'. While this term has been ascribed various meanings, the meaning relevant for the present context is the fact that the giraffe got its long neck because of a crisis—the nature of which is debated by scientists; some say it was food, some others say it was breeding. Whatever the actual reason might have been, the giraffe had a constraint with its short neck and thus creatively evolved to a long neck. Without constraints, there is no creativity.

The problem of plenty is intricately connected with the quality of simplicity. If one can perceive the possibility of plenty, one cannot be simple. Simplicity is directly affected by plenitude. Thoughts are directly proportional to the perception of plenty. The more one can envision plenitude, the more one would have thoughts and desires. This we can see when many go on a shopping spree without actually buying anything! If a person has no alternatives to think of, that person will have far lesser thoughts and desires.

The problem of abundance is also a problem concerning values—personal, social, and cultural. With a plethora of values to choose from, one is driven to terrible confusion, and eventually to an identity crisis. While freedom is imperative for growth, not having any definite values or not having fixed goals in life, can only cause much agony. Let us take the value of truthfulness, for instance. Debating upon whether truthfulness itself is a value has occupied thousands of pages, consumed years of talk, swallowed hours of the visual media, and has resulted in everything being doubted. Here again, the culprit is the problem of plenty. So, we understand that having more does not mean more happiness. The ability to be content with less comes from knowing that we do not need to depend on anything external. 



## MAHASAMADHI OF

# ***Srimat Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj***

**W**ITH PROFOUND SORROW we announce that Srimat Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, fifteenth President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, passed away and entered *mahasamadhi* on Sunday, 18 June 2017 at about 5.30 p.m. at Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratishthan hospital, Kolkata. He was ninety-eight.

### ***Birth and Early Life***

Whenever one stood in front of Swami Atmasthanandaji for offering pranams, it seemed like his eyes are piercing through your very being and getting all the information about your past and future while you stood shyly not ready to reveal your inner thoughts. But he would instantly change that fear into joy by throwing toffees to you that you had to catch immediately. Thus, he merrily tested your presence of mind. He had only blessings showered through those toffees. Such was the personality of Swami Atmasthanandaji who would take control of your mind when in his presence. What struggles and hardships he would have gone through to build such a lofty character that stands like the Himalayas humbling everyone who came in front of him? That is the path we all seek to tread behind these great souls.

Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj was born on holy Buddha Purnima—the thrice-blessed day on which Buddha was born, attained enlightenment, and entered nirvana. He hailed from Kshetripara of Dinajpur, now in Bangladesh. He was born in Sabajpur, his maternal house, near Dhaka in May 1919. His pre-monastic name was Satyakrishna. He passed the Entrance Examination from Dinajpur Zilla High School after which he studied IA in Guwahati Cotton College of Assam. During this time he would visit the Ramakrishna Ashrama at Dinajpur and got closely acquainted with Swami Gadadharananda, the head of the ashrama and a disciple of Swami Shivanandaji Maharaj. Here Satyakrishna was attracted to the lives and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda under the loving guidance of Swami Gadadharananda. Their bonding was so full of love and trust that Gadadharananda instructed Satyakrishna—a boy belonging to Brahmin family with a tradition of worship at home—to perform regular puja and *arati* in the ashrama temple even before he had spiritual initiation.

After completing IA he took admission into the BA course in Scottish Church College and then he shifted to Presidency College, Kolkata. He was staying at that time as a student of Ramakrishna Mission Calcutta Students' Home at Dum Dum, now in Belgharia. While studying there, he was inspired by the personality of Swami Nirvedananda, a disciple of Swami Brahmananda and the founder of the Students' Home, who emphasised brahmacharya and God-oriented life, especially for students. After graduating with honours in philosophy, he took admission into the MA course in philosophy at the Calcutta University.

Student life is a time for receiving life-long inspiration and

strength-giving ideas. During this period if one meets a pure and inspiring spiritual personality, then one's spiritual aspirations take an upward turn and one is instantly attracted to lead a pure and holy life like an iron filing getting attracted to a powerful magnet. Similar things happened with Satyakrishna who met a number of stalwart monks of the Ramakrishna Order during this formative period of his life. Swami Achalananda, a disciple of Swami Vivekananda and the erstwhile Vice-President, was one among them who persuaded him to join the Order without completing the final MA examination. Swami Atmasthanandaji would fondly remember how once this disciple of Swamiji scolded him for delaying his decision to renounce the world.

### Beginning of Monastic Life

When he was a college student, he received mantra *diksha*, spiritual initiation, from Swami Vijnanananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, in 1938 at Belur Math. Till Swami Atmasthanandaji was keeping well, he would joyously narrate on every Buddha Purnima day the details of his initiation by Swami Vijnanananda to the sadhus and devotees present there. He reminisced: 'As he was giving us the mantra and reciting God's name, it appeared as if he was intoxicated. The atmosphere was indescribable.' Among the other direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, he also met Swami

Akhandananda in his boyhood days in Dinajpur and Swami Abhedananda at Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, Kolkata, in his student life.

At the age of 22 years, Satyakrishna joined the Ramakrishna Order at Belur Math on 3 January 1941. After joining, he was sent to Deoghar Vidyapith and then he was transferred to Mayavati Advaita Ashrama. At Mayavati, he worked as





the assistant to the Editor of the English journal *Prabuddha Bharata*. His wonderful reminiscences about the life at Mayavati were published in the March 1999 issue of the journal. He cherished special love and admiration for Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, throughout his life and extolled its spiritual significance.

He also got the opportunity to serve Swami Virajananda, the erstwhile President of the Order, for a long time, a rare privilege! Thus he spent his life in the holy company of Swami Virajananda in the solitude of Shyamla Tal for many years. In 1945 Swami Virajananda initiated him into brahmacharya vows and gave the name Shantichaitanya, and in 1949 initiated him into sannyasa vows and gave the name Swami Atmasthananda.

After sannyasa, he took leave for a few months and performed spiritual practices in a lonely place. When Swami Virajananda entered into mahasamadhi in 1951, he again got leave and spent his time in japa and meditation, and also studied Vedantic scriptures under Swami Jagadananda, a scholar and disciple of the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, at Kishanpur Ashrama. After the end of the leave, he was posted to Ranchi TB Sanatorium as an Assistant Secretary and worked hard to expand its service in many ways. He was sent to Rangoon Sevashrama in Burma, now Myanmar, as the secretary in 1958 and he developed it into a modern hospital, which was the best in Burma at that time. When military rulers took over Rangoon Sevashrama, he returned to India in 1965 and went for a pilgrimage to South India. He was posted to Rajkot as the head in 1966. He learned Gujarati language and spread the message of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, and Swami Vivekananda in whole of Gujarat and influenced the intellectuals, descendants of

the local kings, and common people. He took the initiative to build the beautiful temple of Sri Ramakrishna in Rajkot. Even after many years of leaving Gujarat, he was heard speaking fluent Gujarati with the people visiting him from there. During natural calamities in Gujarat, he had conducted various relief works and other service activities in the rural areas. So, even rural folks remembered him endearingly and felt he is one of their own. In every aspect of his life he reflected the quality of a true monk of the Ramakrishna Order, who has harmonised in his life all the four yogas, while setting himself up completely as an aspirant after liberation as well as the good of humanity. He once pointed out: 'Uplift of the poor masses, work as worship, dissemination of both spiritual knowledge and secular knowledge, organisational integrity and efficiency—these are some of the main ideals that Swami Vivekananda set for the Ramakrishna Mission.'

### ***At the Helm of the Sangha***

He was elected a trustee of the Ramakrishna Math and member of the Governing Body of the Ramakrishna Mission in 1973. In 1975, he was appointed as an Assistant Secretary of the twin organisations. He also became the Secretary of relief operations of the Math and Mission. Under the stewardship of Swami Atmasthanandaji, the Math and Mission conducted massive relief and rehabilitation services in various parts of India, Nepal, and Bangladesh. There were occasions when he had to risk his life while participating in the relief operations.

He was the key person to organise the Pallimangal activities in Kamarpukur and Jayrambati. At the instance of Swami Vireswarananda, the tenth





President of the Order, he started surveying and planning the work of Pallimangal. All those who witnessed his devoted labour for realising Swamiji's dream of upliftment of the poor in the form of Pallimangal and other such activities, are inspired by the amount of dedication he exemplified in his own life. In spite of knowing well the difficulties in doing something for the underprivileged people, he was an impetus behind the tribal welfare activities at Narainpur of Bastar district of Chhattisgarh and Youth Training Centre, Samaj Sevak Sikshana Mandir at Saradapitha, Belur. He was also involved in the building of the TB Sanatorium in Ranchi. All the time he emphasised Swamiji's teachings of 'Serving God in Man'. He believed and preached that great spiritual glory can be attained by practising this teaching. He was particularly interested in serving the womenfolk seeing them as the manifestations of the Divine Mother.

He had a great concern and respect for senior and elderly monks. He took the initiative to build Arogya Bhavan at Belur Math and the Old Age Homes at Barisha in Kolkata, Varanasi, and Ulsoor, now Halasuru, in Bengaluru. He boldly took appropriate steps to restore Swami Vivekananda's Ancestral House in Kolkata, which was entangled in property disputes and

illegal encroachments. He had the proficiency to collect money for various projects of the Math and Mission and also helped to complete the projects of many branch centres of the Order.

He became the General Secretary of the Math and Mission in 1992 and continued to be in that post for five years till 1997 when he became a Vice-President of the Order. On 3 December 2007, after the passing away of the then President Swami Gahanananda, Swami Atmasthanandaji was elected the President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. He was the fifteenth President of the Order.

As a Vice-President of the Math and Mission, Swami Atmasthanandaji travelled extensively in various parts of the country and visited many branches of the Order and some unaffiliated centres. In 1998, he visited the centres of USA, Canada, Japan, and Singapore. He also went to Malaysia, Fiji, Sri Lanka, Burma, and Bangladesh at different times. In all these places, he spread the message of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda and also gave mantra *diksha* to thousands of spiritual seekers. He used to easily influence whosoever came in contact with him.

Though living an intensively busy life throughout, he never skipped his regular practice of japa and meditation. His daily routine was strictly disciplined. Even in his nineties, he would be seen sitting in the *padmasana*, lotus seating posture, for hours, a rare sight indeed!

It is believed in the spiritual tradition that the power and grace of a guru are available everywhere after the guru relinquishes the bondage of the physical body and merges into infinite. The guru becomes all-pervading. Let us invoke the guru-shakti, which was working in the form of Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, and strive hard to receive his gracious blessings here and now.



# In Memoriam: Huston Smith

Swami Chetanananda

TULASIDAS, a mystic of medieval India, said: 'O Tulasi, when you came to this world, you cried and the world smiled. You do such things in your life that when you die, you smile and let the world cry for you.' This is how I felt about Huston. He had innumerable friends and admirers all over the world. His first book *The World's Religions* made him famous, and even today it is in the curriculum in many schools and colleges in many countries in the Western world, especially in the United States. He was a man of tremendous erudition, a wonderful writer and conversationalist, and above all, a perfect gentleman. Sometimes we come across writers and successful professors who are extremely egotistic, but seldom do we come across an academic as humble as Huston. Narrowness, bigotry, and unsympathetic feelings for other religions were completely absent in him. He was a true friend of all religious groups.

I first met Huston in 1979 when we invited him to St Louis to attend the memorial service of Swami Satprakashananda, who passed away in November that year. Huston came and showed his documentary film *Requiem for a Faith, Tibetan Buddhism*. He also presided over the interfaith meeting in our temple. In the late 1940s, when he was a professor at Washington University in St Louis, Huston had come in contact with Swami Satprakashananda through Gerald Heard and Aldous Huxley. Huston had tremendous love and respect for the swami, who edited the chapter on Hinduism in his book *The World's Religions*. Huston often brought some of his

students to the Vedanta Society, and also became its president. In 1952 Swami Satprakashananda tried to buy a house for the center but was prevented due to the social prejudice of the time, so Huston and his wife, Kendra purchased the house at 205 South Skinker Blvd. as a straw party and then transferred it to the Society's name.

We invited Huston to the St Louis and Kansas City Vedanta Societies on many occasions, and he always attended our functions. Here is a list of his lectures that we recorded in video and on CD:

1. 1 December 1979: Chaired and spoke at a religious conference organised in connection with Swami Satprakashananda's Memorial Service. Religions represented: Catholic, Methodist, Unitarian, Judaism, Baptist, Hinduism, and 'I Am'.
2. 2 December 1979: Tribute to Swami Satprakashananda, a short talk at the Memorial Service.
3. 3 July 1988: 'The Light of the World'.
4. 1 October 1988: 'My Quest for the World's Religions'.
5. 2 October 1988: 'Religion in the Twenty-first Century'.
6. 9 October 1993: 'The Mystic's Claim'.
7. 10 October 1993: 'The Contribution of Vedanta to America'.
8. 15 October 1995: 'The Universality of Mysticism in the World Religions'.
9. 11 October 1998: 'Mystical Classics of the World'.
10. 1 May 2005: 'My Early Days in Vedanta'.

11. 18 October 1997: Interfaith Symposium, sponsored by the Vedanta Society of Kansas City held in the Ruisch Auditorium.

Once Huston and I spoke in Kansas City, and then he did a book signing at Borders Books. A young man asked him: 'You are a Christian. Why are you involved with other religions?' Huston replied with a smile: 'Young man, hold onto your faith. As you eat your regular food and take vitamins as food supplements, similarly I enjoy my own religion and take other religions as supplements. They all give me tremendous strength and extra energy.'

Once, Huston told me something that I often quote in my talks. He said that Christ taught the four yogas of Vedanta, when he said: 'Love thy Lord with all thy heart [that is Bhakti Yoga], with all thy soul [that is Jnana Yoga], with all thy mind [that is Raja Yoga], with all thy strength [that is Karma Yoga].'<sup>1</sup> As Huston explained, the great Vedic dictum, '*Aham brahmasmi*; I am Brahman'<sup>2</sup> and Christ's saying, 'I and my Father are one,'<sup>3</sup> have basically the same meaning; only the wording is different.

Once in the St Louis center I asked Huston to say the final prayer. He chanted a Sanskrit verse in his melodious voice: '*Asatoma sad gamaya, tamasoma jyotir gamaya, mrityorma amritam gamaya*; lead us from the unreal to the real, darkness to light, and death to immortality.'

On another occasion at Kansas City, Huston stayed in our monastery in the room next to mine. He told me that night: 'Swami, tomorrow morning when you go for meditation, please call me if I am asleep. I shall join you.' He was up before then and we meditated in the shrine for an hour. Afterwards, during breakfast we had a lively discussion on the Bhagavadgita. At that time, Huston was asked to write introductions to the classics of four major religions: the Gita, the Dhammapada, a collection of Rumi's

poems, and *The Way of a Pilgrim*. I told him some characteristics of the Gita and he listened with great interest. Afterwards, he asked me to jot down those points and send them to him, which I did. I still have my copy of those notes. Huston was not only a teacher, he also was a great learner, and that is the reason his ideas were always fresh.

Although Huston was a serious professor of religion and philosophy, he was full of fun. His joyfulness and spiritual practices kept him young even in his old age. One day, in a lighter vein, I said to him: 'Gossip spreads faster than the gospel.' He laughed and noted the line on a piece of paper. He told me about his two battles: First, fighting to legalise the use of peyote for Native American religious use<sup>4</sup> and second, regarding the origin of life from the spiritual and biological standpoints. Unfortunately, I don't remember the details. Of course, Huston won both battles.

In 1993 the Ramakrishna Order arranged a large convention in Calcutta in connection with the one hundredth year anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's appearance at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. The convention continued for three days and many great thinkers and scholars from all over the world participated. Huston chaired one of the sessions and I chaired another. Later I introduced Huston to Swami Bhuteshananda, the erstwhile president of the Ramakrishna Order. It was a wonderful meeting of two great persons. During this visit to Calcutta, Huston also met Mother Teresa.

Whenever I asked Huston to write a preface or a blurb for my books, he always enthusiastically complied, despite his busy life. He wrote two beautiful prefaces for *Vedanta: Voice of Freedom* and *Vivekananda: East Meets West*. His wonderful style of writing is so appealing that I shall quote a few of his blurbs. In addition to the Dalai Lama's blurb, Huston also wrote



one for *Sri Ramakrishna and His Divine Play*: ‘Detailed eyewitness accounts of spiritual geniuses—whose impact on history far surpasses that of kings and potentates—are second only to sacred scriptures in the place they occupy in the library of humanity. Now, at last, we have a splendid translation of the source biography from which all previous accounts of Sri Ramakrishna have drawn. Swami Chetanananda’s long-awaited translation of *Sri Ramakrishna and His Divine Play* is an epic event in the unfolding saga of world spirituality.’<sup>5</sup>

After receiving the book, on 15 December 2003 Huston wrote to me: ‘Swami, I have just opened your book. It is magnificent, magisterial, awesome, sumptuous. I could add on superlatives “until the cows come home”, as the Missouri farmers used to say. If this was your only accomplishment ... your life would have been well spent.’

In 2008, Huston wrote a blurb for my book *How to Live with God: In the Company of Sri Ramakrishna*:


In my study of the world’s religions, I have been fortunate in coming upon inspiring firsthand accounts of the world’s great spiritual geniuses, including Sri Ramakrishna, India’s greatest 19<sup>th</sup> century saint.

During the summer in the 1950s, while I was writing the chapter on Hinduism in what was to become my book, *The World’s Religions*, I read and meditated on ten pages of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* each day, and I credit those meditations for the acclaim that has greeted that chapter. Now Swami Chetanananda has infused Ramakrishna with new life for our time. He has produced an important book that puts us all in his debt.<sup>6</sup>

In 1988, while at Syracuse University, Huston wrote this blurb for *A Guide to Spiritual Life*: ‘Testaments of this nature—and calibre—are

indispensable to the spiritual quest. Reading it lifted me to heights that bordered on ecstasy.’<sup>7</sup>

When I heard that Huston was not well, I went to see him at his Berkley home on 18 July 2014. We talked for nearly twenty minutes as he lay in bed. His memory was clear; he asked me about the activities of the centre and then reminisced about his days in St Louis and Swami Satprakashananda’s Christmas service. A devotee took some pictures of him: his face was calm, serene, and joyful.

There is very little space in the golden boat of history, no room for the masses and even so-called rich people to enter. Only they who have sacrificed their lives and contributed their all for the good of humanity have a place on that boat. Huston Smith occupies a space in that boat, and his name most certainly will be recorded in the pages of religious history of the Western world. 

## References

1. Luke 10:27.
2. *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 1.4.10.
3. John 10:30.
4. In 1990 the US Supreme Court ruled that the use of peyote as a religious sacrament by Native Americans was not protected under the US Constitution. Smith took up the cause as a noted scholar of religion. With his help in 1994, Congress passed the American Indian Religious Freedom Act amendment, providing legislative protection to a religious practice that the Supreme Court had decided lacked constitutional protection.
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# The Cultural Heritage of India

Zhu Wenxin

THE SYNCRETIC HERITAGE of Chinese culture had already been flourishing when Confucius was born. He was brought up in the eastern part of the small State of Lu in ancient China. Endowed as he was with breadth of vision, Confucius (551–479 BCE) studied the classical literature of various ethnic groups in the country gathering ideas for compilation and transmission. He picked up two concepts of crucial importance as most typical of the spirit of Chinese culture: 中; *zhong* and 几; *ji*—literally ‘the centre’ and ‘the spring’—for him both the terms had meta-physical and infra-physical connotations. ‘Centre’ signifies the centre of human life and that of the cosmos as well, hence capable of expressing the unity of both human and heavenly ways as an integrated whole, meaning thereby the way of eternity. ‘Spring’ refers to the delicate beginning of change. All impermanent changing events in the realms of being and non-being, all live, move, and exist in resonance with the spring of things, that is, the subtle and imperceptible beginnings or seeds of movements.<sup>1</sup> By such patterns, change unfolds itself in the world of life, moving from the human way upwards towards the heavenly. This central principle of Chinese culture ‘Firmly set up the Great Center as Supreme Principle to grasp the spring of things; and unceasingly abides there to realise the process of change’. This central principle has exerted tremendous impact on the subsequent development of Chinese culture ever since.

No other nation on the earth has attached so much weight to the Great Center as the

Supreme Principle as we Chinese have done—with the only exception of India. We have adopted from time immemorial the ideogrammatic character 中; *zhong*, in form analogous to the Greek Φ as an icon for China, 中国, signifying ‘the Country of the Great Center’. In *Zuo’s Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals* it is stressed: ‘We human beings are born as bearers of the Center of heaven and earth; and that is what is meant by “life” as endowment with a mission.’<sup>2</sup> So crucially important is this concept of *zhong* for the understanding of China and Chinese culture! What after all does it mean and imply?

‘Its religious import had never been realized until recently in academic studies in comparative folklores,’ remarks the late Professor Thomé H Fang, who was invited in a most friendly way in 1939 by Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan to serve as spokesman for Chinese philosophy and culture, thus performing the same service for China as Radhakrishnan was doing for India.<sup>3</sup> ‘This Great Center as Supreme Standard is an icon symbolic of eternal value in the philosophical, axiological, and ontological sense.’<sup>4</sup> The official title ‘China’ appeared in the Xia Dynasty (2183–1752 BCE) according to *The Book of Ancient History*, for instance the chapters, ‘The Timber of the Catalpa Tree’ [梓材] and ‘Contributions of the Great Yü’ [禹贡].<sup>5</sup> Fang calls attention particularly to what he considers the *Chinese Book of Revelation* in the twelfth chapter, ‘Grand Matrix of Nine-fold Categories’ [洪范·九畴] and gives his insightful interpretation:

Fifthly, Lo! The Great Centre or Supreme Standard. And greatness should be due to the Centre for its firm establishment. This is really the core of the whole philosophical lore which asserts that the great Centre should be set up as the supreme standard of reality and value and should be taken seriously by all the people—the ruler as well as the ruled. For this Great Centre is the Primordial, representing what the modern historians of comparative religion would call the Celestial Archetype, whence all came and whither all should return. In the entire Chinese archaic world, everything hinged upon this primal principle of impartiality. This is the clear original philosophy of the Middle Path leading on and beyond to the realm of Eternity.<sup>6</sup>

Here we can locate the common ground of affinity and the point of contact, as it were, for these two great Eastern peoples and their cultural heritages—China and India. According to Fang:

Each culture has its own determinative factor. For instance, in Hebraic and Islamic cultures, religion decides everything; all features other than religious life will be of lesser importance. In the contemporary European and American branches of world-culture, science is the predominant factor, and everything has to fit in with science. So far as I know, it is only the Greek and the Chinese cultures which, alike, find their master-key in philosophy and art. India in classical antiquity, I should add, pursued the *madhyama-pratipad*—the middle path in the matter of culture.<sup>7</sup>

In sum, thanks to Dr Radhakrishnan's friendly invitation, as well as to Master Fang's response, we are now in a position to safely assert that China's concept of the Great Center echoes India's call for the *Madhyama-Pratipad*! We find the best exemplification of this common faith in the person of the great Indian poet-philosopher

Rabindranath Tagore who, in his powerful words, states: 'We are obliged to treasure the beautiful and noble cultural legacies of our two great peoples.' And, during his 1924 visit—his 'homecoming journey'—to China, Tagore found that the culture of the Central Way was more relevant to the rural than the urban areas which he toured!<sup>8</sup>

Fang further points out that reverence for the symbolic Great Center is not confined to the Chinese and Indian peoples alone. For, according to Professor Mircea Eliade of the University of Paris, it is really a shortened form of the principle of archaic ontology based on 'the abundant facts drawn from Mesopotamian beliefs, Sumerian texts, Egyptian celestial-terrestrial geographies, Iranian cosmology, Judaeo-Christian sanctuaries and holy cities, Indian celestial city-models and Vedic hymns, Scandinavian creation-myths, as well as the variegated divine models of rituals prevalent in the Egyptian, Indian, Judaeo-Christian and Greek archaic societies.'<sup>9</sup>

As viewed today, the original Chinese culture, deeply nourished by the digestion and absorption of *Mahayana Buddhist Sutras* introduced from India during the early centuries of the Christian Era, followed by further contacts with India through the long period of two thousand years, has now assumed a new outlook intellectually and spiritually in the present century. As the critic Lu Xun said in *Refutation of Vicious Voice*: 'Our contact with India started very early since the ancient times; it has benefited us with great blessings, covering the full range from thought to faith, morality, arts and literature, in a way far superior to what we could expect even from brothers and spouses.'<sup>10</sup> For the moment, suffice it to mention briefly, en passant, Indian Buddhism in particular, without going into any further details. Ever since the modern period, however, introduction through translation of

the full range of books on Western philosophy and civilisation began with Yan Fu (1854–1921). As a result, a massive influx of thought on politics, philosophy, and arts and literature dating from the Greco-Roman era down to the modern European period made its way into the Chinese mind. It has ended up partly with some lessons of utmost significance, and partly with a great deal of historically deep pain. It reflects a passive cultural crisis, known as ‘the greatest change over the last three thousand years in China’s history’ because of the profound suffering involved which is at once distressing and bizarre. Indeed, as a result of historical changes and transformations in the course of our cultural life, we have been made so ‘Greco-oriented’ or ‘Western-oriented’ in our use of language as to fit in with the current pattern of thought in current intellectual and academic fields. Such a phenomenon has now continued for nearly 160 to 170 years. This has led to axiological confrontations. We may still have a long way to go along this course of value-reorientations.

The time has now come for us to see retrospectively the earlier chapters of Chinese history and to realise that we have neglected another important source of culture from which we have been abundantly benefitted, namely, the cultural heritage of India. It appears to be silent but so near to us, ever lively but so incomparably time-honoured. Though the course of modern India’s socio-cultural life is also no less dangerous and risky, and in certain aspects even more fatally critical than ours, nevertheless, as far as the continuity of their own culture itself is concerned, the Indians are bravely successful and full of self-confidence. Apart from other matters of concern, during the short span of no more than one hundred years in the last century, India has produced for the world many great masters of the wisdom of life such as, to mention but a few, Sri

Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Ramana Maharishi, Jiddu Krishnamurti, and others, in a way that commands our admiration and even amazement. The edifying effect of their influence, to quote the ancient Chinese sage Mengzi, is such that whenever ‘they pass through, they will remodel the character of their followers; wherever they abide, they will work wonders among them. Their spiritual influence will spread out all over the world, becoming concurrent with that of Heaven and Earth’,<sup>11</sup> thus inspiring us all the more. Historically speaking, there is a rather high degree of congeniality in the relation between Indian and Chinese cultures. In fact, the interaction and assimilation of the two cultures has continued in depth and spread across my country China so much that it has become an essential aspect of our own spiritual makeup, our nation’s lifeblood. But it is particularly noteworthy that what we have received from the primary sources of Indian culture has been the Buddhist streams of thought, especially the Mahayana Buddhist tradition. First came the Shunyavada school of Nagarjuna; then came the Yogachara school of Mahayana through Bodhidharma. For such a vast people as the Indians, their intellectual scope is not confined to any particular school of thought, and Buddhism never made itself the mainstream of the Indian heritage. Though Buddhism attained the summit of its achievements and experienced its glorious phase in India, it was soon superseded by the Vedanta tradition, which was far more abundant in theory and practice. The Buddhist high masters were repeatedly defeated in philosophical encounters by such great masters of Hinduism as Acharya Shankara and others.

As a result, the mainstream of Mahayana Buddhism moved eastwards to China, and the stream of Theravada Buddhism moved to South



Asian countries. Such being the situation, we deeply regret that we have been so long separated from the most precious Vedantic heritage of India which has maintained unbroken continuity from the Vedas onwards. We feel so all the more acutely in recent times. Compared with Chinese culture, Indian culture proves perhaps superior in terms of philosophical depth and diversity. Once immersed therein, we feel like one who attempts in vain 'to survey the heavens from an earthen jar and to measure the oceans with a shell spoon'! The great charm of wisdom implied in Chinese culture—only to be neglected at one's own peril—is of course not to be belittled. The Indian people have possessed the noblest Buddhist wisdom in the human world; yet their great masters from generation to generation have eventually given it up or hidden it somewhere. Does this mean that Indian culture is totally devoid of Buddhist wisdom? No, the truth is Indian culture absorbed the best elements of Buddhist philosophy, especially Nagarjuna's logic, but it failed to absorb Buddha's compassion and social equality.

What constitute the bases of Indian culture other than Buddhism? How far are these cultural bases relevant to modern China? This is the crucial question. We deeply regret the fact that current researchers in this area are found to be rare. In the academic circles of China today, including those of the Buddhist Sangha, a savant who is truly at home with the fundamental tenets of Indian culture is admittedly hard to come by. This is far from being symmetrical with our research and interest in Western cultures.

According to our superficial understanding and judgement, there have been a host of intrinsic connections between the Indian classics and Chinese culture, whether in terms of their spiritual aspirations or their cultural heritages. Although these parallel views and concerns are

not directly put forth in their classics for mutual reference, nevertheless they are deeply resonant with one another in so far as their philosophical tenets and main themes are concerned. We often find in some Chinese classics of the pre-Qin period, such as the works of Laozi, Confucius, and Mozi, and others, an all-pervasive atmosphere or mood throughout or, so to speak, a sort of spiritual nostalgia. Much attention has been devoted to the remembrance of those spiritual realms which their ancient 'sages and worthies' have legendarily attained. This parallels especially the idea of 'yugas' in Indian culture. We may also regard it as a recollection analogous to the *parampara* heritage so strongly recommended in the Vedic culture.

Indeed, a variety of key concepts in Indian culture can find their echoes on our side, for example, 'Brahman' for 'Heaven' in the 'Ordinance of Heaven, how inscrutably sublime it is and goes on forever!' (*Eulogy on Zhou*); 'Atman' for 'human beings' in 'The humans are the soul of all creatures!' (*Oath of Tai*). More significantly, 'dharma', both the eternal dharma, Sanatana Dharma, and the temporal dharma, yuga dharma, strongly echoes the exalted wisdom embodied in 'Dao' as 'the mysteriously mysterious mystery and the gateway of all wonders'. This universal concept of 'Dao' applies in all the pre-Qin schools of Daoism, Confucianism, and Moism as represented by *The Book of Dao* and *The Book of Creativity*. It also comprises the dual aspects of permanence and flux.

In both the Indian or Chinese cultural heritages the non-dualistic mode of wisdom embodied in *brahma-atma-aikya*, identity of Brahman and Atman, and the 'unity of human being and heaven' has an inscrutably long tradition, as if from time immemorial we have conceived this kind of thought in terms of vague traces of impressions. For example, the holy Vedic dictum

'*Tat tvam asi*, you are that'.<sup>12</sup> What a coincidence we find in 'Hexagram of Great Possession' in *The Book of Creativity of the Zhou Dynasty* wherein it is said: 'By "great possession" is meant the perfect correspondence between heaven and earth, above and below. Act by virtue of strength and vigour, elegance and brightness, in response to the heavenly way in proper time. From that comes, supreme success.' In addition, on both sides we find a common universal mystic search for 'immortality' and the constant yoga practice as divinely ordained.

None of these parallels in thought and practice are supported by any documentary evidence after the introduction of Buddhism into China proper; rather, they serve as ample evidence for the essential and profound affinity that has intrinsically existed in the cultures of our two countries. This accounts for the dedication to the spirit of 'great peace and harmony' or simply, 'correspondence' in Chinese culture. It is seen, therefore, that a great deal can be done by investigating this approach, and there is plenty of scope for mutual stimulation igniting our heart and soul.

In the past I translated some original classics of Indian culture, for example, *Fifty of the Upanishads*, regretting that my contributions were far from sufficient in quantity and breadth. Moreover, they lack annotations and commentaries. Admittedly, with this kind of shortcoming, I am unable to help promote and propagate Indian culture in our current project of cultural reconstruction. It is precisely with the hermeneutical tradition of such original classics, with special reference to deep and far-reaching impacts on and significance for the history of Indian culture, that we should be seriously concerned now. The Indian tradition of commentaries on the original classics can be likened to the similar practice in China on the *Thirteen Classics*, in that it

has taken a long period of time to complete. In India different commentaries have formed different documentary sources, which again develop into various schools of thought, thus spiritually making the mainstreams of Indian philosophy and culture. Nevertheless, few of these important traditional texts have been translated by us into Chinese. In the early times we had several senior scholars who did some pioneering translation work in this field. But regrettably, their efforts suffer from the fact that either their language is too obscure, their style too personal, or, most basically, their versions lack detailed exposition. Unavoidably, this accounts for the loss of attention they deserve.

We must therefore, demonstrate the same kind of courage and spirit as those devoted Buddhist monks of China and India who in the early centuries of the Christian Era trudged long distances, climbing over high mountains and sailing across wide oceans, to translate the entirety of the *Tripitaka Buddhist Sutras*. We aim to reintroduce in China the characteristically genuine Indian thought—which is essentially inclusive, vast, mellow, vigorous, far-reaching, and ever-lasting in spirit—for the sole purpose of furthering Chinese culture by widening its intellectual territories and opening up its spiritual horizons, especially in the current age when China is facing her new destiny, in a new era.

However, the task of translation requires considerable time, and long stretches of it, to guarantee accuracy. The current language barrier is found to be far less severe as a challenge than those spiritual and intellectual barriers of early years that stood mountain high. The popularity of foreign language teaching programs at most Chinese schools has long prepared us in various ways for due appreciation and absorption of the universal truths prevalent in the world. Therefore, if there are scholarly works on the

original sources of Indian philosophy such as the sutra literature, so long as we can secure their copyrights, we may well reprint them directly in photographic form. Due to their cultural significance, we believe this method of introduction through direct publication of English translations, along with discourses and dialogues, proves far superior in terms of expediency and effectiveness; I suspect that this perhaps is the chief reason why Huang Shuhui, the Shanghai publisher, has conceived such a huge project as *The Universal Library* to be implemented with photographic reprint service for a variety of original works. In this regard, I believe, my guess would prove not too far off the mark.

In speaking of India's cultural heritage, the vast Vedic literature should by no means be neglected. If circumstances permit, they should make a magnificent enterprise for our next project. For such a major enterprise an encyclopaedic collection of reference books, prefaced with an overall introduction, proves indispensable. We are now seeing such a comprehensive masterwork, namely, the current series of *The Cultural Heritage of India* in eight volumes published by the Ramakrishna Mission's Institute of Culture in Kolkata, India.

Traditionally, India is known far and wide for her vast storehouse of spirituality, religious plurality, documentary complexity, linguistic multiplicity, and historical durability. From generation to generation her sacred and secular literature has been passed down to posterity chiefly by oral tradition, and secondarily by manual copies, without the modern facilities for alphabetic printing and fast dissemination. Thus, although the Indian tradition is incomparably vast and broad, and immeasurably rich and opulent, it is overwhelmingly complex, and apparently chaotic. But beneath all the chaos and complexity there is a basic spiritual unity.

It is this basic spiritual unity that makes Indian culture universal and valuable. Nevertheless, the orderly arrangement of documents of Indian culture in the strictly philological sense is hard to come by even for Indians. By contrast, Chinese scholars have been nurtured to maturity by Chinese philological consciousness. Additionally, Indians started their work in this direction rather late; precisely, it was not until the earlier half of the mid-nineteenth century that they, under Western influence, came to be awakened for the first time to classical philological scholarship in the modern sense.

In modern times several works on India published under the title *The Encyclopaedia of India* have come into existence. Nevertheless, in terms of editorial thoroughness, scholarly eminence, and investigational depth and breadth, we can hardly find any other work comparable with *The Cultural Heritage of India*, which is really so unique. Those so-called volumes of *The Encyclopaedia of India* vary in length and quality. If measured solely by the total amount of literary matter, some of them may be found to be even superior to the present series at hand. For example, the recently published *Encyclopaedia of India* in eleven volumes, chiefly edited by Swami Chidananda Saraswati, head of the prestigious Paramartha Niketan Ashram Yoga Academy, Rishkesh, India. This magnificent work has been dedicated to His Excellency Pranab Kumar Mukherjee, the incumbent President of India, featuring an amazing coverage and an amazing number of participants, totalling two thousand. It took twenty-five years of collaborative work for it to be published. Since I have not read it myself, I should refrain from venturing any comments prematurely. In addition, the volumes of *The History of Science, Philosophy, and Culture in Indian Civilization*, edited under the direction of D P Chattopadhyaya, founder of the Indian

Council of Philosophical Research and concurrently its first President, is also encyclopaedic in nature. Sixteen volumes have already been published in this series; more to be continued in sequence. It belongs generally to the historical studies of the material sciences and philosophical thoughts, analogous in the main to the series of *Science and Civilization in China* edited by Joseph Needham, University of Cambridge. For such a country as India, superior in religious civilisation and spiritual thought, this type of work seems rather restricted in scope. Of course it has certain reference values for scholars, but is not a matter of first choice for us.

We may evaluate the present series from different angles. For instance, we feel well justified in calling this current series of *The Cultural Heritage of India* a classical masterpiece in its field, or simply a crowning achievement in Indian classics. It is in no way less encyclopaedic in scope on its own account, as it covers all the major streams of Indian culture in a brief but clear way. More importantly, as all the authors of articles are eminent scholars, the whole series proves to be authoritative throughout. Each volume is edited by a well-known scholar. For example, Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, an Oxford professor who served as the President of India serves as the chief editor for the first volume. The chief editor of the second volume is the legal luminary C P Ramaswami Iyer. As the chief editor for the third volume, we have Surendranath Dasgupta, one of the most distinguished scholars in modern India, who was an authority in Sanskrit and formerly the President of the Indian National Philosophical Society. All the volumes in the series are the result of long-term preparation for over eighty years. During this long period, some of the authors passed away, and some of the articles were replaced with new ones. The series features an extremely wide range of references,

covering the full gamut from history to philosophy, religion, art, science, politics, languages, philology, and so on. The eighth volume, newly added to the last portion of the whole series, gives a brief survey of the achievements of modern India in the fields of art, science, literature, and philosophy. The whole series of eight volumes succeeds in updating and revising modern people's notions about Indian culture. For example, we think that India's ancient spiritual and philosophical wealth had suffered either decline or dislocation. The Indian heritage of old Sanskrit teaching, as well as the Indian oral tradition, seemed to have disappeared, both owing to being victimised by the entry of European cultures. But, from the present series of *The Cultural Heritage of India*, we come to know that the Indian forest heritage remains still alive, full of vitality. These eight volumes dispel a good deal of our misunderstandings and distorted notions about Indian culture.

To sum up, the entire current series is a well-integrated representation of the mainstreams of the vast and old culture of India. It somewhat differs from the average type of encyclopaedic works compiled with a systematical collection of entries. For example, it aims to be not merely informative, but also intellectually stimulating; it does not aim to be introductory, but to be investigatory. It has gathered together more than three hundred of the most outstanding Indian scholars of the last one hundred years to engage themselves in a splendid undertaking. Hence, with respect to those within or outside the academic communities, and those within or outside the religious communities, as well as those from all of the great cultural heritages, including of course, the scholars of China, this series abounds in wide-ranging and all-important matters, some of which are revelatory in character. The first volume has been particularly blessed with a preface



from the pen of Rabindranath Tagore, the most outstanding Indian poet, who was then of an advanced age. The overall planning, organisation, and publication of the present series is officially conducted by the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, the premier organisation of spiritual and cultural propagation and supreme authority of contemporary India.

The first time I came to know of the existence of this series was when I was in the southern part of London, where there is a beautiful city, Reading, with the girdle-like Thames flowing through it. It was ten years ago that, guided by a British senior, I had the good fortune to visit the Center of Indian Cultural Propagation, where I finished reading the first four volumes of the early version then available. I was at once fascinated. I thought, if this series could be translated into Chinese, what a great help it would be to our Chinese scholars for their studies in Indian culture. On the very spot I purchased all of the few copies available. Surprisingly, they were huge in their contents, besides being published serially in sequence. Now it has reached eleven volumes with nine supplementary books, totalling 9,000 pages. More surprisingly, I was soon to receive the benefit of what may be truly called a rare good karma, a heavenly endowed good opportunity, so to speak. Not only was I able to befriend Huang Shuhui, ambitious but noble-minded in his bold conception of cultural ideals; but also I became acquainted with Swami Durgananda, an affable, scholarly monk of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission. With the Swami's help I was finally able to contact Swami Suhitananda, the erstwhile General Secretary of Ramakrishna Mission, and secure from his reverence the official certificate of authorisation to reprint and provide a translation for this series. All these events and end-results sound

just like a matter of course, echoing the ancient Chinese proverb:

It is he who solely occupies my thought;

It is he who firmly carries all this out!

[念兹在兹，出兹在兹].

If it is not too presumptuous, does not such a phenomenon of 'flowers bloom and stems fall', in the Buddhist language, really herald 'a great event'?

Of course, if the whole series is to be translated, we would rather save the job for Chinese scholars who are better qualified and more mature than we are. But then, translation of the whole series is a very huge project, and it may take several years to complete. That would mean my compatriots would have to wait for several years to gain access to these precious classics. Therefore, in consultation with Huang Shuhui, it was decided to represent the English version itself from Shanghai.


Max Müller, the outstanding orientalist and scholar of Germany-England, offered this tribute to Indian culture:

If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered over the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant, I should point to India. And if I were to ask myself from what literature we who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans, and of the Semitic race, the Jewish, may draw the corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human a life ... again I should point to India.<sup>13</sup>

Müller's remarks, I am convinced, can equally apply to our modern Chinese, who

have been deeply 'nurtured' in the impacts of Western cultures for over one hundred years. They need to be awakened to the need for an infusion of Indian culture in order to arouse our self-awareness of reflections and correctives on the matter of our cultural heritage and its renovation. In fact, with their inquiry into the origin and essence of life, and the distilled wisdom attained thereto, the Oriental people have ever provided for all humankind the best quality nourishment. Indeed, whether in India or China, there are to be found immeasurable spiritual values. If one wonders, why have the Chinese people been able to persist for several thousand years, firmly standing among all nations in the world while unfailingly dazzling with the glow of their holy charm, the reason is not far to seek. Essentially it is due to their being able 'to expand the inner being outwardly; and to *apprehend* the extensive connections inwardly'. This is what is meant by 'viewing the world from the perspective of the Great Centre as the Right Way'. On this crucial point the Chinese sages of antiquity have a clear admonition to pass on: 'By contemplating the beauty of forms existing in the heavens, we come to understand time and its changing demands; yet by contemplating the beauty of forms existing in human society, we come to be able to shape the world.'<sup>14</sup>

At the present moment, I wish to extend our special acknowledgement to the original publisher of the *The Cultural Heritage of India*, namely, the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata and the headquarters of Ramakrishna Math at Belur Math, West Bengal, India. We are most grateful for their kind permission in granting us the copyrights for reprint and translation—a great meritorious event indeed that provides for our Chinese scholars the finest tools for Indological studies. Thus, in this new

era, Sino-Indian cultures may welcome another interaction in the form of a new cooperation and a true alliance of friendship. 

## Notes and References

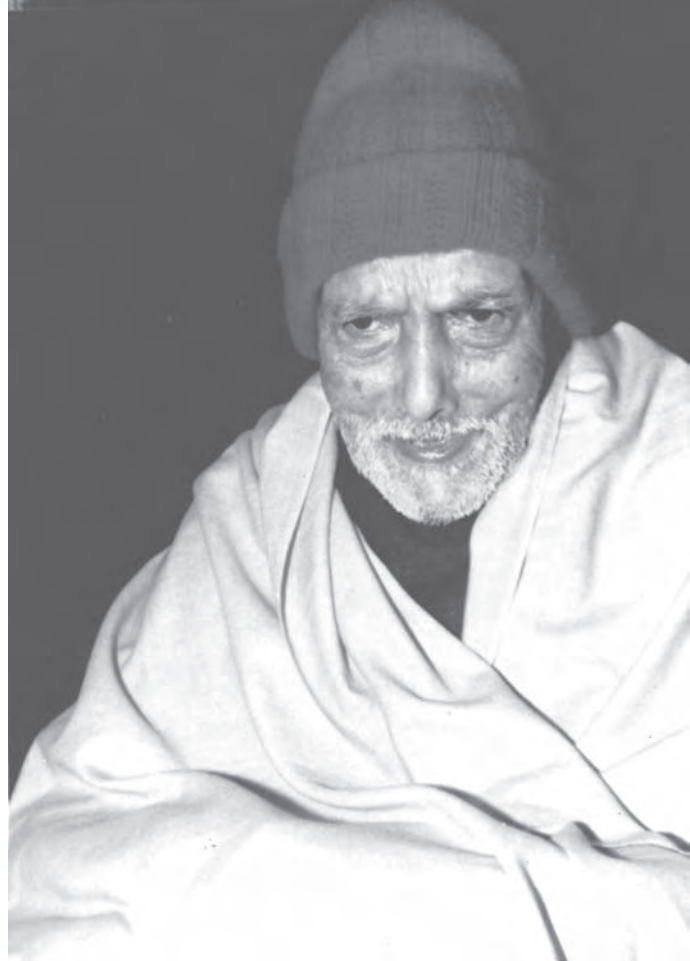
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# ***Gems of Memories: Reminiscences of Swami Saradeshnananda***

**Swami Shuklatmananda**

*(Continued from the previous issue)*

**A**FTER RECEIVING INITIATION and the brahmacharya vows from the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Saradeshnananda stayed on at Jayrambati. During this period he served the Holy Mother, staying at different places—Jayrambati, Koalpara, or sometimes at a nearby village, Nabasan. Seeing devotees toiling day and night in the Holy Mother's service, people would pass sarcastic comments: 'What a spell of illusion they are under!' Such criticisms simply passed them by. The Holy Mother had always been their inspiration. We have heard that due to occasional malarial breakouts, nobody, except a few local attendants, could continue the service. Saradeshnananda served the Holy Mother for five years in different capacities. Once he took a month's leave to go to some other place for recovery from a malarial fever. On another occasion, for the same reason he went home. With tears in her eyes, the Holy Mother sent him and cautioned him over and over again to keep out of the snares of family life. She asked him to serve his parents as the veritable manifestations of divinity. To his dismay, he got into so many difficulties after going home that he altogether forgot the Holy Mother's warnings. Later, when she sent a



message to him, he realised his follies and rushed to her immediately.

Saradeshnananda was very eager to receive sannyasa vows from the Holy Mother but being born in an orthodox Vaishnava family he had a strong wish—perhaps it was his parents' wish too—to perform the last rites of his parents. When after the passing away of the Holy Mother and Swami Brahmananda, and Swami Shivananda's health was also declining fast, all his well-wishers suggested that he receive the sannyasa vows as soon as possible. At last shrugging off all reservations, he received the sannyasa vows from Swami Shivananda in 1930. His desire of performing the last rites of his parents was partially fulfilled as he was able to do the rites for his mother. His father probably passed away after his sannyasa.

Though Saradeshnananda was staying with the Holy Mother from 1915, he could officially join

the Order only in 1920. While staying in Jayrambati, he was not, to be precise, an official monastic member of the Order. When Mother came to Udbodhan from Jayrambati during her last illness, Swami Saradeshananda told him: 'If you want to join the Order, please stay for a few days in the Math. We shall take you in.' He was the pujari for one and half months after the temple was established at the Jayrambati ashrama. He was either the *tantradharaka* or the pujari during the temple dedication ceremony of the memorial temples of Sri Ramakrishna and Mahendranath Gupta at Cossipore burning ghat. Shortly after this, he set out for wandering through the whole of India as an itinerant monk. Over three years, he travelled, mostly on foot, along the coast, keeping the holy land of India on his right. During this period he gathered detailed information on Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's southern visits and verified them with many authentic books of olden times.

We know little about his whereabouts during his itinerant days or the days that followed. We have heard from him that he stayed in Madras for about one and half years at a stretch. He stayed in Dhaka and Bangalore for a couple of months also. Once he told me: 'I went to the Dhaka monastery as a monastic worker in the beginning of 1930.'

Revered Swami Bhuteshanandaji once told me about an incident in Dhaka: 'You were Swami Saradeshananda's attendant. Have you heard about his malaria bath in Dhaka? There he used to frequently suffer from malaria. Having suffered for days on end, he became really fed up with the fever. We also felt exasperated. One day we bathed him by pouring buckets of cold water on his head! And lo! He felt better on that day itself and within a few days recuperated fully. After that he was quite well for a long time.'

Twice I had the rare privilege of seeing these two great souls together—Revered Swamis

Saradeshananda and Bhuteshananda. Swami Bhuteshananda was then one of the Vice-Presidents of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission. Though Bhuteshananda was much younger, almost ten years younger, than Saradeshananda, they had a very cordial relation. Bhuteshananda always preferred to sit on Saradeshananda's bed, rather than on sofa or on chair. They would talk for a long time. Bhuteshananda had a keen sense of humour. Once he told his attendant: 'Please bring my shoes here. I'll return from here itself.' When the attendant brought the shoes, he put them on and asked him: 'Have you wiped off the dust?' 'Yes, Maharaj', replied the attendant. 'With what?', asked Bhuteshananda. 'Just with my hands, Maharaj', replied the attendant. Then Bhuteshananda laughingly told Saradeshananda: 'Just look Maharaj, my attendant could not find a piece of cloth for these shoes and used his hands instead to clean them!' Before taking leave of Saradeshananda, Bhuteshananda called his attendants to make salutations to Saradeshananda and asked him: 'Maharaj, please bless them.'

Saradeshananda would sit quietly on his bed after Bhuteshananda would leave. He would say: 'A great scholar and yet so humble! Such a monk is rare!'

In this connection, I remember one incident about Bhuteshananda. During one of the usual evening gatherings of sadhus and brahmacharis in his room, when he was the President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, everyone was beaming with joy and humorous talks were going on. At such a time one monk said: 'Maharaj, why don't we talk about some serious matters now?' Immediately, Bhuteshananda's countenance changed completely, and he said: 'Do you want to hear about serious matters? We are all ready to settle the inheritance. Only we don't find the heirs. Come,



you all come and settle it. That's what we want.' The room was filled with awed silence. Nobody dared to utter a word.

Besides serving the Holy Mother, Saradeshananda served Swami Abhedananda for a couple of months, when he stayed in Belur Math after his return from the US.

As far as I remember, once he told me that he saw nine direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna—Swamis Brahmananda, Shivananda, Premananda, Abhedananda, Subodhananda, Akhandananda, and Vijnanananda. When Swami Adbhutananda was staying in Balaram Mandir, Saradeshananda went to see him but unfortunately Adbhutananda was not there. As immediately after that he went to Varanasi, Saradeshananda did not see him.

We came to know from Saradeshananda himself and also from other monks that he spent a long time in Rishikesh undergoing spiritual practices. But we know nothing about how long he stayed or how many times he had been there. I heard that he stayed at Tulsi Math in Rishikesh. Mahendranath Gupta, M., used to send some money for his daily expenses. I saw the following written on a post card in M.'s handwriting: 'Give two rupees to Swami Saradeshananda.'

Here is what we heard from Saradeshananda about his stay in Vrindavan: 'I cherished a desire to stay in Vrindavan. Srimati Radharani fulfilled this desire to my heart's content. Legend has it that it is impossible to catch even a glimpse of the holy Vrindavan without her grace, let alone staying there. I came to see the new Sevashrama here and stayed on.' Just before coming to Vrindavan, he was in Ramakrishna Mission's centre in Khetri. Swami Vishvadevananda was there at that time. He had a deep reverence for Saradeshananda. Vishvadevananda was posted at Vrindavan Sevashrama as a monastic worker. From Vrindavan he invited Saradeshananda to spend

a few days there. Saradeshananda also was quite willing. He came to Vrindavan at once. But he did not like the idea of staying and partaking food in the Sevashrama, which was meant for the service of the poor. So, despite repeated requests from the monks he chose to stay in a small cottage, just behind the Sevashrama premises. He was quite reluctant to accept even a penny from the Sevashrama fund for his personal needs. He lived on *madbhukari*, begging handful of food from door to door. It continued for a few days, and afterwards he used to receive alms from the Govindji Temple. There were arrangements for only five monks in Govindji Temple. As one of them went away, Saradeshananda got the chance. Afterwards, the Sevashrama authorities became very eager to bring him in. To begin with, a fund was made for the maintenance of two monks. Having got the assurance that he would not be living at the expenses of Sevashrama, he shifted. From then on, he stayed there for twenty-eight to thirty years. In between, during 1976–7, he stayed in the Agartala ashrama on the request of the then president of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Swami Vireswarananda.

I used to think that he resolved not to step outside holy Vrindavan for the rest of his life. I told him one day: 'Maharaj, let's go to Jayrambati and Kamarpukur. I'll also have a chance to visit these places. I have never been there.' In reply he said: 'Such a journey is very tiresome in this age. The body will not permit.' I asked him out of curiosity: 'Maharaj, have you resolved "*vrindavanam parityajya padamekam na gachchhami*; I will not keep even a step leaving Vrindavan"? Will you stay here till your last and will not go anywhere? Then how come you stayed for a year or so at the Agartala ashrama?' He replied: 'It is not a resolution or any such thing. I never dreamt of staying for so many years in holy Vrindavan. Now, in this advanced age, if I go somewhere, it

will be a pain for me and for others as well. And about Agartala—don't you know that Revered President Swami Vireswarananda requested me for that? A request from the President is an order and his is Sri Ramakrishna's order. It is for this reason that I went to Agartala. Besides I had a cordial relation with him.'

Their relation was so full of extraordinary love and respect that it was only to be seen to be believed. I had the rare privilege to see them together about four times. Once, Swami Premeshananda made a significant and illuminating comment on the lineage of the Presidents of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission: 'Every year we bring a new idol for worship. You, [the then President, Swami Madhavananda] are the new idol of Sri Ramakrishna.' The life of Saradeshananda was tuned likewise. Upon reaching the Vrindavan Sevashrama, Swami Vireswarananda would first enquire after Saradeshananda, who would also be ready to receive him. In spite of being repeatedly dissuaded, Saradeshananda would kneel

down on the floor and most reverentially touch Vireswarananda's feet.

Every time Vireswarananda visited Vrindavan, he would unfailingly bring something for Saradeshananda. Once he brought a pair of sandals of a new type, made of clothes. Saradeshananda wanted to carry them to his room but Vireswarananda insisted that he put on them there itself. As Saradeshananda reluctantly slipped his feet into them, Vireswarananda said: 'See, these sandals are strict vegetarians. You may wear them in temple also. There is no need to take them off.' I am incapable to express in words, the sheer joy and bliss that flowed when those two great souls were together.

When the construction work of the new Sevashrama was underway in the present premises, it was felt necessary for someone to stay there, as the new land was about two kilometres away from the ashrama. Saradeshananda used to stay there in a small hut.

In the old Sevashrama he used to stay with a blind monk, Swami Madhuryananda. I cannot resist the temptation to recount a few incidents in this connection.

Madhuryananda stayed in Vrindavan for over twenty years in a room besides that of Saradeshananda. He was a homeopathic doctor. For the last ten years of his life, he was virtually blind. As long as both of them lived in the old ashrama, Saradeshananda used to read scriptures to him regularly. In this connection, I remember one touching incident. Madhuryananda had a special liking for food. He would every now and then forget that he had eaten anything and would feel hungry in the next hour. One day the monk incharge of the kitchen went to his room and jokingly said to him: 'Maharaj, what do you want to eat? Tell me, I'll feed

*Swami Saradeshananda with Swami Vireswarananda*



you to your heart's content.' Madhuryananda said: 'I want to eat *amriti*.'<sup>12</sup> *Amriti* was not available at that time in Vrindavan, as it was already June and generally *amriti* is prepared during the months of October-November. So, the kitchen incharge was in a dilemma. He said: 'Maharaj, it is not time for *amriti*. Will you have any other sweets?' Madhuryananda was unyielding. He said: 'No! I will have *amriti* only. Nothing else!' We were all very sorry, but what happened on the next day surprised all of us. The Secretary swami returned from Delhi with two bucketful of *amritis*. Good heavens! How was it possible? We were all taken aback. Actually there was a feast in the memory of Swami Budhananda at the New Delhi ashrama. Those two buckets of *amriti* came from there. These *amritis* were served to Madhuryananda. He had two at the time of his lunch. In the evening his attendant noticed that he was not moving at all and called me immediately. I went and saw that it was all over. What a tranquil death and how strange! Sri Ramakrishna removed even the last fragment of his child's desire in the most miraculous way! We can hardly judge anybody from outside. Saradeshananda used to say: 'Madhuryananda is staying in Vrindavan for so many years but I never seen him complaining about anybody!'

I recall another interesting incident about him. Somehow we came to know that Madhuryananda's sannyasa had been delayed for some reason or other. One day finding him alone, we asked him: 'In which year did you join the Order?' He told us the year he joined. Then we asked: 'When did you get your sannyasa?' Again he told us the year of his sannyasa. Drawing his attention to the delay in years, we asked him: 'Why this delay?' Then he said: 'Oh! Don't ask me. That was a scorching day. I was the pujari in Swamiji's temple. The pujari was supposed to bring all the prasad, including the green coconut to the prasad store. As I was

feeling thirsty on that day, I helped myself to the coconut water on the way! And you know there is no escape from Swami Abhayananda's keen eyes. He called and enquired about the incident. I told him all. He didn't say anything but later I discovered that his actions were more eloquent than his words. I got one year's detention.'

A guard used to regularly bring them their daily meals. Saradeshananda liked the old Sevashrama very much. He would say: 'It is a perfectly suitable place for an ashrama. The best place in Vrindavan. Such a tranquil atmosphere. You can have a clear view of the Yamuna from the ashrama. The place is very conducive to spiritual practices.' I have heard from many sadhus like Swamis Bhavaharananda and Lokanathananda that Saradeshananda used to tell them: 'Where will you go for performing spiritual austerities? Go to the old ashrama and spend some time there quietly. There is nothing like the old ashrama.'

In the Vrindavan Sevashrama there was one small book-sale counter that I used to look after for some time. The president of the managing committee of the Sevashrama once bought some books and later sent the amount through somebody. On counting the amount I found that there were additional five paise. I wondered as to what to do with this meagre amount. I sought Saradeshananda's advice on this and his instant reply was: 'Certainly, you should return this to him. Here the amount doesn't matter, what really matters is integrity.' When I went to the guest house, where he was staying and returned the balance to him, he was very pleased and highly praised the Ramakrishna Mission and its monks in front of his relatives and friends, who were present there.

One non-Indian devotee-couple used to write letters to Saradeshananda, who also had a special affection for them. Once when they visited Vrindavan, they stayed for a few days in

the ashrama guest house. When in the morning, they would come for making salutations to Saradeshananda, they used to spend some time with him. Somewhat emboldened by the love and affection showered on them by him, they asked thrice: 'Swamiji, with your kind permission could we ask you a question?' After Saradeshananda's consent, one of them asked: 'Swamiji, did you have any spiritual vision or realisation?' He replied: 'I have never run after spiritual vision or any such thing in my life and still I am not. But this much I can say that I have felt God's Grace.' While saying this, he became very excited. Normally he found it very difficult to turn on the side while lying in bed. But on that occasion, with a sudden and forceful movement he turned on the other side and said: 'Turn them out at once.' Taken aback, I asked him: 'What happened? Are you having any difficulty?' He became impatient and said: 'Ah! Don't talk. Do what I say. Something untoward may happen otherwise.' Then I told the devotee: 'He is feeling exhausted. Please do not talk. It is better if you go now.' As soon as they got out, Saradeshananda said: 'I'm having much difficulty. Rub my back from above to below.' When I asked him what had happened, he said: 'There has been an upward movement of spiritual current. Do not talk now.' After I rubbed his back as instructed, he gradually became calm and fell asleep.

Once a woman-devotee made *pranams* and sat on the floor intently gazing at Saradeshananda's face in sheer amazement, who smilingly asked her: 'What are you looking at?' The devotee answered: 'What utter bliss your face radiates! Maharaj, how is it possible to have such a face?' He promptly answered: 'Only if we do not have desires.' Afterwards he told me: 'Perhaps some small desires are still lingering, otherwise how does the body carry on?'

One day, dusk was gradually setting in.

Though it was already dark inside, there was still a little light outside. Saradeshananda was alone in the room, sitting quietly on the edge of his bed. He was, as it were, lost in thought. I was doing something there. He quietly called me and said: 'See, I won't have to come again. I have got intense dispassion towards this world and this body!'

In this connection, I remember another incident. Swami Dhireshananda came to Vrindavan. We used to take Saradeshananda around the temple on a wheelchair then. One day in the morning, when Saradeshananda was returning after some such rounds, we saw Dhireshananda looking at him very closely, as if searching for something. Coming near, Saradeshananda smilingly asked him: 'What are you looking at?' Then, Dhireshananda said: 'During Swami Premeshananda's last days, Suhitananda used to take him out on a perambulator. Then, I too looked at him, much like you are looking at me today. And just like me, he too asked: "What are you looking at?"' In addition, Premeshananda said: "I won't have to assume a body again!"' Listening to this incident, Saradeshananda said: 'He was absolutely right. In such a state, one gets strong dispassion towards one's body also.'

Once, in the course of conversation, Dhireshananda requested Saradeshananda to reveal the names those who were marked anonymous in his book *The Mother As I Saw Her*. Though reluctant at first, he finally acceded to the request when he was assured that those were not to be divulged in any form and were only meant for personal remembrance.

During his stay at Vrindavan, Dhireshananda used to come to Saradeshananda almost every day in the morning and used to sit for some time. Beforehand, Saradeshananda had told him not to discuss any serious topic as it brought on physical difficulties for him during those days. One day however, taking his permission, Dhireshananda



asked him a question or two. He asked: 'Please tell us how one feels in deep meditation.' Saradeshananda then said: 'You know that it is extremely difficult to express such experiences in words. But this much can be said: one experiences ineffable joy during the moments that precede the state of deep absorption and also afterwards when the mind gradually returns to the external world. When, by degrees, the mind starts becoming quiet and deeply concentrated, one feels as if one is being engulfed by an infinite ocean of bliss. One becomes oblivious of time, space, circumstances, and even of one's own body. Again when the mind comes back to the external world, the experiences of the deep meditative state still lingers. This shloka of the *Shiva-Mahimna Stotra* captures such a blissful state in a few words: "The great yogis regulate their breath, control and still their mind, look inward, and enjoy the bliss with their hair standing on edge and eyes filled with tears of joy. It looks as though they are immersed in nectar. That bliss which they see in their heart and exult thus, is verily you yourself!"<sup>13</sup>

After the conversation Saradeshananda said to Dhireshananda: 'Now it is not possible for me to talk anymore. Discussion of such matters raises the spiritual current. My body is not that strong now. I feel uncomfortable.' When Dhireshananda left the room, Saradeshananda asked me to gently stroke his back.

A devotee with all his family members used to visit Saradeshananda from Lucknow. Saradeshananda also was very fond of them. He asked the devotee's wife one day: 'Why do you take so much trouble to come here?' She replied: 'We come only to see you! The very sight of you fills our hearts with joy. We cannot call on God wholeheartedly!' Saradeshananda then said: 'Do you have a copy of the book *Shri Shri Chaitanyadev*? Please read it, you will find [me] there. It is too tiring for you to travel such a long distance in

this scorching summer!' She said: 'Maharaj, your very sight compensates for all the discomfort!'

In fact, to a considerable extent, Saradeshananda had actualised in his life many instructions of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Seeing his monastic life imbued with strict renunciation and austerity, I, at least, have formed this idea. Even now, when I read the book *Shri Shri Chaitanya Dev*, and reflect upon the practical side of the renunciation described there, Swami Saradeshananda comes to my mind first.

(To be continued)

### Notes and References

12. *Amriti* is an orange-coloured Indian sweet made of black gram.
13. *Shiva-Mahimna Stotra*, 25.



# Saga of Epic Proportions

**Swami Sandarshanananda**

*(Continued from the previous issue)*

NIVEDITA REMEMBERED Swamiji's words in which Swamiji told her confidence in the Brahmos and Tagores was temporary and was due to pass. That moment arriving now, she recalled Swamiji's saying: 'Well, Margot, I see. This is the period of your such and such conviction! You have had your Brahmo conviction, and your Tagore conviction, and now you have these convictions. And they will pass, as the others did!' <sup>29</sup> (1.526). Sarala's domineering behaviour seemed harmful to her. She therefore thought of keeping her 'boys' away from Sarala's influence. She said, 'But it is odd to see how my anxiety to keep my boys from touch, sight or taste of the group explain to me all Swamiji's irritability about my own connection' (ibid.). She explained her reform attitude to Miss Macleod after undergoing disillusionment about them: 'To tell you the truth, I am disillusioned about the whole Baligunge connection. Sarala is now installed as Vicegerent of the Mother. She writes to me and calls on Dr. Bose, to organize us, in her army. Her paper is said to be doing great service, preaching Kali-worship and the rest. Meanwhile I find not one soul amongst them to risk his own valuable neck. And more this talkee-talkie proceeds at a scream, the more quiet do I find myself becoming' (1.525–6). It clearly shows that she observed their patriotism a pretension behind the façade of love for the motherland. Frivolity of the Tagores, toward which Swamiji drew her attention repeatedly, while she was giving free rein to her

whims to mingle with them, had now struck her correct, at last. They made a fetish for sophistry; and their temptation for limelight remained hidden no more from her. Their pride and wealth was quite on the surface. She was disenchanted with Sarala's deportment and left pinning hope in her for any kind of collaboration. Her derisive remarks against Swamiji, presumably, were the last straw for her dislike to Sarala.

Sarala was perhaps twenty-five years old when she first came in Swamiji's contact. She made a mark taking part in active politics. Her father Janakinath Ghoshal was one of the Congress secretaries. In the Congress Session at Calcutta in 1901 she composed and conducted a patriotic song leading a group of fifty-eight singers. Amusingly, there was a rumour for a while that she would marry Gokhale. Giving a lie to it, later on she got married to a Punjabi gentleman Rambhuj Dutt Chaudhuri, already a twice widower, in 1905 at the age of thirty-three. By the standard of those days it was a late marriage for a woman. She was the mother of a son named Dipak. Her contribution to national movement was well known. Her house at Lahore was a halting place for visiting political leaders and personalities. She impressed Gandhiji deeply when he came to Lahore in 1919 to attend Lahore Congress. By dint of their similar political perceptions they developed an intimacy among them. As a result, they thought of a 'spiritual marriage', which they believed could be productive for the Indian politics then. Rambhuj was in prison at that time.

The leaders of Congress took it exceptionally and were apprehensive at the prospect of a serious discontent within the party, in case it would happen actually. It, however, at last did not materialise because of the aggressive intervention by C Rajagopalachari.

In the beginning Nivedita was overmuch influenced by Sarala's qualities. She was amazed to have seen her striking a rapport with Swamiji on the intellectual plain. She wrote Macleod in February 1899: 'I wish you had been here on Monday to hear the King [Swamiji] with Sarola. It was all Sanskrit and Bengali, but I seemed to understand, the tones of the voice brought back the greatest moments we have ever known' (1.61). She wrote again to Macleod after a few days: 'He is [Surendranath Tagore] just a hero and devoted to us. National to the finger tips. You will know *all* that that implies. I have the same feeling for him as for my beloved Montague, with rather more admiration. The King noted with great pleasure that my friends came to me in Bengali dress yesterday. He is beginning to love Sarola' (1.67). Nivedita's overwhelming trust in them was largely due to Swamiji's appreciation of their education and ability to understand him. But, afterwards, when he gauged their minds for the circumstantial changes he withdrew himself and decided to remain aloof from them and take Nivedita with him during his visit to the West second time instead of Sarala. Eventually, with her disappointment multiplying, experiencing Sarala's slovenly dealings and their relationship rotting, Nivedita, presumably, dissociated herself from her as well. Having her family and their Brahmo idiosyncrasies in tow, Sarala harboured an insolently deflected vision not to be able to see eye to eye with Nivedita. So, their paths were irreconcilably opposing. Unlike Sarala, trained by Swamiji and acquiring a clear perception of her goal shown by him, Nivedita was set on the

path of revivalism of the glory and legacy of ancient India shrouded in the chaos of modernism that deluded the gentry by the glamour and gimmicks of borrowed Western ideas which hated everything of India's past. Tethered to spiritual essence, she explored numerous Indian avenues comprising science, art, religion, philosophy, literature, monuments, culture, politics, society, history, geography, and so on. Her journey was excessively intricate and complex because of her British descent, involvement in violent politics, responsibility to take Swamiji's work ahead, and because of an inner urge for protecting Indian heritage from atrocious intellectual onslaught perpetrated by the Raj to denigrate the people as uncivilised, in which the so called progressive Brahmos were unconscious partner for their bitter condemnation of age old Indian customs and practices. Her battle was quite peculiar and hazardous. She had to walk on the thin ice and court the slippery side of the slope often. On the one side, the urgency for the recovery of the honour of her vilified guru and, on the other, it was salvaging and reinstating India's prestige and image.

Whatever Sarala did for the nation was comparatively superficial. She had a volatile way of functioning, showing a dearth of depths. There could not have been, therefore, any meeting point between her approach and that of Nivedita's. They, accordingly, clashed naturally, and went away in diverse directions. The extraordinary predicaments Nivedita faced to pursue her ideal and demolish the pretentious reformism fed by the high browed Brahmos are unique a matter for serious studies of scholars. She was suffused with a celestial power of dedication infused by Swamiji during her spiritual initiation, tutelage and transition. Swamiji's message to her was: 'Make inroads into the Brahmos' (1.31). She bore its brunt and transformed it into a reality, of which the Boses were a glowing example.





*Devendranath Tagore (1817–1905)*

At sixteen Swamiji had joined the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj led by Shivrath Shastri and Vijaykrishna Goswami. He had preferred it for spiritual purposes as well as for its programme of the development and emancipation of women. Tagore's being neighbours, his movement among them in their house as a boy was free. He fell under the affectionate attention of Devendranath. Devendranath discovered in him certain rare spiritual characteristics. He inspired him to meditate. And meditation was Swamiji's forte from early childhood. While in the Scottish Church College Dipendranath, son of Jatindranath—the elder brother of Rabindranath—was his fast friend. At this time he sang the songs written and composed by Rabindranath for the marriage ceremony of the daughter of the Brahmo leader Rajnarayan Basu. Being an accomplished singer, he was chosen for singing

Brahmo devotional songs regularly in its functions and meetings. He once acted on stage with Keshab Chandra Sen in the play *Navavrindevan* written by Trailokyanath Sanyal at Keshab's Nababidhan Brahmo Samaj. In spite of his intimacy with the prominent Brahmos, he somehow got disillusioned of Brahmo Movement. He failed to find any so spiritually rich as to be able to realise God. They could not satisfy his spiritual thirst at all. Eventually, amidst that crisis, he inscrutably landed before a worshipper of Kali Sri Ramakrishna and accepted him as his guru at the age of eighteen. But, both Kali and the custom of guru were bugbears to the Brahmos—they abhorred these from the core of their heart and considered them enemy of their opposite camp who subscribed to them. Rabindranath Tagore despised her and was annoyed when Romain Rolland wanted to talk about Kali with him. Although the Brahmos disliked Swamiji from then onwards Swamiji never forgot the advice of Devendranath for meditation given during his formative stage as a spiritual aspirant. He was always deeply grateful and respectful to him and sought his blessing off and on. Because of Brahmo ideas entrenched in him, he admitted that he fought his Guru for long six years initially. He told Nivedita about it and also about Brahmo ignorance regarding Symbolism. Nivedita wrote to Macleod on 21 February 1899:

The king talked coming home yesterday about Sri Ramakrishna. My Kali lecture had been a good foundation for bringing him to an issue with the Tagores, so the talk had been all of Symbolism. Mr. Mohini [Chatterjee] had come in. 'Poor Mohini' he said, 'he has never studied the history of Symbolism. That is why he does not understand that the natural symbols are no good. You see I had a curious education. I went to Sri Ramakrishna and I loved the man but I hated all his ideas. And for 6 years it was hard fighting the whole time. I would say 'I don't care



in the least for this thing [Kali worship] that you want me to do,'—and He would say 'never mind, just do it, and you will see that certain results follow,'—and all that time He gave me *such* love! No one has ever given me such love—not my father or mother or anyone. And there was so much reverence with it! He had a kind of veneration for me. He used to think 'this boy will be so and so' I suppose. And he would never let me do any menial service for Him. He kept that up to the very moment of his death, too. He wouldn't let me fan Him—and there were many other things. He wouldn't let me do. But Mohini hasn't had all that (1,58).

It was difficult for Brahmo Mohini Chatterjee to believe Nivedita was indulging in a lecture on Kali and dexterously upholding the Goddess's glory before the public at large. Brahmos scandalised Kali but to no effect to Nivedita. She continued her campaign of Kali and spoke at the temple premises of Kalighat in Calcutta. There was also large audience comprising both Indians and Europeans.

If the Tagores and other Brahmos were unable to see the divine beauty of the image of Kali, and called the image ugly and nasty it was their innate weakness. Due to a kind of pseudo intellectualism, they failed to penetrate into the super sensuous truth symbolised by it. Their critical attitude toward Kali inspired the Christian missionaries resorting to whose activities the imperialist British established their colony in India. Kali is one of the finest representations of the Indian mind. Conceptualising the Absolute and the Relative in unison in Kali image, India demonstrated how the abstract could be shown in the concrete and tangible for worshipping God. Brahman, when manifested, is a mixture of all kinds of opposites, such as love and hatred, good and evil. Kali is this manifested form of Brahman, the two remaining non-different essentially. Opposites meet in Brahman and remain apart in Kali. Kali

is perfect representation Brahman's power manifested as the universe. In the rich imagination of devotees the Power of Brahman which delivers the universe is Kali the Divine Mother. In her image Shiva represents the inactive Brahman and She Herself the active Brahman.

She is standing on Siva, for She is only another aspect of Siva. She is active and Siva the inactive form of the same principle. She is dark because nothing could be predicted about her. She is both terrible and comforting, the former represented by her two left arms and the latter by her two right arms. Her sword is knowledge, which cuts through the bondage of karma represented by the skulls. She sticks out her tongue to lap up the desires that bind. She is the real liberator of man. She is terrible to chase away man's weaknesses, affectionate to bring out his best. She is a symbol of strength, vigour and courage.

No religion may be valid without the scope of

*Keshab's Navavidhan Brahmo Samaj*



worship. In all its nuances the worship of Kali as the Mother of the Universe with undivided love and devotion in her omniscient and omnipresent aspect is an extremely effective means for the realisation of God the Absolute. Under the guidance of his God realised Master, Swamiji could see how practicable was Kali worship. Coming in contact with Sri Ramakrishna and having enjoyed his holy company, a conspicuous transformation came upon the celebrated Brahmo leader Keshab Chandra Sen. How the former influenced and moulded the latter some time before his demise is well documented by the eye witnesses. Even then, there were deliberate attempts by Keshab's followers after his passing to falsely distort and suppress it in a dubious fashion. Nivedita was disgusted to notice all that. On 16 March she wrote to Macleod: 'I enclose a cutting from a paper that has just reached me. It would amuse you to find the Brahmos claiming that K. C. S. [Keshav Chandra Sen] *made*—'Our Lord'—*made* Sri Ramakrishna—good heavens! How was it that another disciple so far outshone the spiritual Father of the Master and the Faith, I wonder? However, I was much amused' (1.88). Like Nivedita, it was indeed a matter of amusement to any knowledgeable person surely. For there could not have been a more ridiculous thing to fancy that a believer of formless God Brahmo Keshab was making a consummate idol worshiper to realise God, that too in the Brahmo condemned image of Kali!

Hence, according to the instruction of her Master, Nivedita was preparing to strike the Brahmo duplicity. She was visibly busy to make them respect Swamiji. After the gap of a month she told Macleod in April: 'I see what has happened—the Tagores are won and perhaps the modern Brahmo Samaj are trembling on the verge but I have not yet sent an arrow into the family and church of K. C. Sen. I wonder if that will happen soon. They *all* ought to recognise Swami. Anyway—when Abh.

[Abhayananda] is out of the way and I begin lecturing again—my first lecture shall be something about Sri R. K. [Rama Krishna] and women' (1.103). Her preference for speaking on a matter like that was also quite suggestive. She might have planned to show publicly that Sri Ramakrishna was truly a promoter rather than a detractor of the cause of women. She decided to counter the Brahmo propaganda against Sri Ramakrishna to show him as an enemy of women.

Needless to say, Nivedita's frustration with the Brahmos must have compounded with the memory of severe mental tortures they subjected her dear Master to suffer for nothing, trying to assassinate his character in the West as well as in Calcutta out of sheer jealousy. Giving a vent to it, she wrote in a letter to Macleod again after another month on 28 May: 'The Brahmos make me ill. They are a hopeless lot' (1.155). Such a comment was because she couldn't 'make inroads into' them as she desired. Her purpose was to make them reasonable and thereby make them see her guru in a different light to be able to perceive his greatness and the greatness of the work he was doing. Seeing her hopeless condition, Swamiji visibly came forward to give her support. For she then said: 'But Swami said rebukingly "When people come into the world to serve an idea, Margot, they have to make their own material too. They must not expect to find people ready to listen"' (ibid.). This speaks of how arduous her tasks were. Swamiji's choice of her for all such activities indicates his boundless confidence in her. Nivedita's surrender to her guru and sacrifice for India were humanly impossible, as it were. Profundity of her crusade for the regeneration of India and furthering her guru's work lay in the purity of her character, in her intrepid perseverance, and in her freedom of thought—all augmented by virtue of the elevated teaching of her Master. Her fearlessness was complete to

be able to give a rude shock to the British government. She dealt out blows to all its hideous designs to thwart and sap India at will.

### **A Crusader**

Swamiji was to her Father and God, and she dear daughter to him—occasionally maybe a truant and impish restive child not easily reined but never incorrigible. Whatever was then emotionally happening apropos the Boses was necessarily short-term. There wasn't the slightest sign of waning affection among them. Later, expectedly, she shed copious tears for not paying adequate heed to his certain important instructions. There was a time when her sorrow was poignant as she thought she had failed to make herself worthy of the love her Father had showered on her. Her repentance was as good as any beloved daughter soaked in the sense of filial duty who would incessantly regret her Father's loss and not being able to grow a right medium to carry his lofty legacy forward which was, of course, not correct. For, what she did in line with Swamiji's ideas was inestimable and exemplary.

Nivedita was all the while reasonable in her view regarding her own limitations. Completing a year of her brahmacharya, she wrote to Mrs Bull on 26 March 1899: 'I fancy he made me a Brahmacharini for life partly for the sake of reviving the old order of Naishtik Brahmacharini, and partly because I am not really for anything higher in his eyes' (1.93). Like a doting child she demanded from Swamiji to learn puja. That Swamiji yielded to her demand fondly and taught her the same was also narrated by her to Mrs Bull. 'Yesterday morning he gave me my long desired lesson in Puja! We did it there together in little Chapel—and he chatted away so sweetly all the time—just like the dearest of mothers teaching a young child in a sweet way' (ibid.). She was always trying to speculate the cause of why she

was denied sannyasa. On 9 April 1899 she likewise wrote to Miss Macleod: 'So you see I have no lack of friends, and if the Bishop is friendly I may become as able to choose my own as I ever was in England. I am going to try to stifle my silly notions about conventual life in that case—for there does seem to be a certain work for me to do—and it just flashed across my mind yesterday that *that* was truly [whether he was thinking of it or not] Swami's reason for making me a Brahmacharini and not a Sannyasini' (1.115). Yet, needless to say, she was carefully nurturing a pious hope for sannyasa in a corner of her heart. She thought she could move her Master by her effort and satisfy him. But when she found that it was not to be she was difficult to harness all the more, as it were. Swamiji knew her so well that he never interfered with her sense of freedom. He appreciated her independent thinking. Considering it his duty, though he sometimes showed the prospective side as well as the contradictory side of a thing she believed she should do.

*Keshab Chandra Sen (1838–84)*





In fine, it didn't escape Swamiji's notice that she was oblivious of monastic disciplines and norms while mixing not with the Boses alone but also with the Tagores and others. Swamiji politely alerted her before repeatedly to restrain her readily, drawing attention to the incompatibility of their way with that of the way he prescribed her, in order to shaping her for a spiritual cause which was known to her well. In the end, he probably thought that she deserved admonitions. Besides, her inclination towards politics might also have prompted him to act in that manner. He prohibited participation in active politics for the members of the Ramakrishna Order. His clairvoyant perception had likely urged him to decide not to give her sannyasa, for, going like that, he might have wondered, it would be hard for her to honour the sannyasa given. That he behaved with her in that fashion was with a purpose is clear from what he had then said 'very quietly' to Nivedita: 'You won't understand this now Margot, but when you get further on, you will. And this is what I have been brought up to believe' (1.129). Whatever he told was, of course, not palatable to Nivedita at that moment. She accordingly told Macleod next with deep respect to him though: 'You know, in spite of the violence and utter unreasonableness of much that he said, how holy and rapt the mood was. As for the friend for whom it was meant, I feel that when the time comes for me to give the message, courage will not be wanting. But I fancy that Sri Ramakrishna does not speak direct to so white a soul as that man's—and in loving me as they do—are the Brahmos not really loving Him?' (ibid.).

If Swamiji had passed any caustic remark against marriage, it was certainly not against the institution of marriage as such. Talking to Nivedita in seclusion, he upheld the ideal of monasticism in terms of Vedantic dictum. In view of the Vedanta, marriage is reprehensible,

for it is the harbinger of that kind of ignorance which is the principal cause of all illusion which breeds worldliness and miseries, keeping spiritual realisation as well as liberation at bay. Vedanta reduces desire—the worst deterrent against realisation—to its three fundamental aspects, namely, desire for a spouse, desire for wealth, and desire for name and fame, which are inextricably linked with each other and hazardous to seekers of spiritual liberation. And it is the most difficult thing to get rid of desire for good. Swamiji's purpose was to exorcise Nivedita of the illusion he thought Nivedita was suffering from because of her indulgence in indiscriminate involvement in the Bose's affairs, who was not a monk but a householder from whom she was to maintain a proportionate distance while mixing. Crossing the border, that she was virtually getting absorbed and lost in Bose's affairs contrarily and eventually going astray unconsciously had made Swamiji worried. When he reprimanded her it didn't obviously occur to him that the conversation could ever be public. Swamiji was unsparing while training her for the work. On 6 December he wrote to her the same year from Los Angeles:

If you are really ready to take the world's burden, take it by all means. But do not let us hear your groans and curses. Do not frighten us with your sufferings, so that we came to feel we were better off with our own burdens. The man who really takes the burden blesses the world and goes his own way. He has not a word of condemnation, a word of criticism, not because there was no evil but that he has taken it on his own shoulders willingly, voluntarily. It is the Saviour who should 'go his way rejoicing, and not the saved'.<sup>30</sup>

Nivedita had once said she was pleased to have committed mistakes sometimes, for they incited Swamiji to burst out with glowing truths which she wouldn't otherwise have the opportunities to hear.



Similarly, while Nivedita wrote that personal letter to Miss Macleod privately, she also didn't suspect others would ever know about it. Swamiji's compassionate heart panted for the recovery of his spiritual child who seemed to him was lapsing into reprobate tendencies putting her spiritual life at stake. On the other hand, being unable to see the point Swamiji was stressing, Nivedita confided in her closest friend and benefactor a dignified displeasure. But the matter should never be taken as an explosion of Swamiji's grudge, either against Bose or against the act of marriage embedded in the process of human life from the dawn of civilisation. To him each was great in its place, for he could be found to have lauded them at other times when they demanded it necessarily. In the case of Bose, one could comfortably find this from what he did with him after a couple of years at Paris Congress in 1900 as described earlier. What happened between Swamiji and Nivedita on that day was, conclusively, too sacred a matter, not to be seen from a secular angle at all and interpreted otherwise.

When Swamiji was no more Macleod, too, offered her occasional counsel, watching her unbridled mixing with people. Nivedita had never accepted it but argued to prove Macleod wrong. But there was a time when she could really understand what Swamiji had told her and deemed him correct. She wrote to Macleod on 28 April 1910:

I have just been lost in a dream of all I owe to you, how you taught me step by step to love Swami, and be constantly true to that love, in every little thing as well as big. It wasn't perhaps altogether wicked of me that I had not known how, before. Your life had been full of loving and being loved, and surrendering yourself to drift on the great current, and I have only twice in my life been *thoroughly* approved of, even now, and both times in India! Still at bottom if one will own it, there is a difference of nature

and intuition. You were born to love, and I, I suppose, was it to work? No, I think I was born just simply to blunder! Well, I don't know what it was. I seem to be failing pretty badly, in a great many ways—more ways than I could ever tell you. I should be quite content if I could come out true to Swami in some one thing—never mind *mukti*. Who am I, that I should lay up anything to my credit, in that account? If I could only keep in His shadow—and never get across the edge of it!<sup>31</sup>

(To be continued)

## References

29. *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, ed. Sankari Prasad Basu, 2 vols (Calcutta: Nababharat, 1982), 1.526.
30. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), 7.521.
31. *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, 2.1094.



# BALABODHA

*Ancient Wisdom Made Easy*

## Shravana


SPIRITUAL PRACTICE consists of three stages: *shravana*, *manana*, and *nididhyasana*. Since the Upanishads exhort one to do *shravana*, it is necessary to know the meaning of this word and what exactly is meant by the practice of *shravana*. This is a Sanskrit word. Sanskrit is a classical language like Greek, Latin, and Persian. And in Sanskrit, as in most classical languages, most words are derived from a stem or root.

The word *shravana* is derived from the root *shru*, which means to hear, listen, attend, learn, attend to, obey, to be celebrated, to be renowned, known as, pronounced, announce, declare, inform, communicate, relate, and tell. *Shravana* means hearing, that which is heard, learning, study, understanding the true meaning, fame, and reputation. *Shravana* does not mean just listening to the Vedantic sentences, but it means determining the true meaning of Vedanta contained in the Upanishads by the use of six *lingas*, signs: *upakrama-upasamhara*, beginning-conclusion; *abhyasa*, repetition; *apurvata*, originality; *phalam*, result; *arthavada*, eulogy; and *upapatti*, logical determination of meaning.

First, one has to see the correlation between the beginning and the conclusion of a particular section and that they relate to the same subject. Second, one has to repeat the same thought or deliberate on the same thought over and again till it makes a strong impression and leads to conviction regarding the subject. Third, the meaning of the Vedantic sentences should be something that is not mundane, but original and one has to find out this meaning, even though it is covered with ordinary

knowledge. Fourth, such analysis should lead to a result that is attainable and should not be a fanciful thought. Fifth, one should be able to distinguish between the subject and eulogy and should know the reason for such eulogy and should concentrate on that which is being eulogised and not on the eulogy. Sixth, one should be able to logically follow the illustrations to find their implication and come to a definite conclusion about the subject.

Therefore, *shravana* does not mean mere hearing of knowledge, but understanding and assimilation of such knowledge after logically analysing it. It means that there can be no room for doubt, even at this stage. *Shravana* has to be considered as a logical and natural stage in the whole process of understanding one's true nature, and has to be followed by the processes of *manana*, contemplation and *nididhyasana*, meditation. By *shravana*, the spiritual aspirant has to find the true meaning and significance of the *mahavakyas*, great Vedantic sentences that proclaim the identity of the Atman and Brahman, for example, '*tat tvam asi*, you are that'. In this sentence, the process of *shravana* would involve a careful analysis of the words 'you' and 'that' and how they are identical. Hence, *shravana* does not signify a passive listening but an active understanding.

From a devotee's perspective, *shravana* means listening to the names and divine play of the Lord. Here too, *shravana* requires complete faith and surrender to the Lord so that when the devotee listens to the names of the Lord, one is convinced that these names would lead one to freedom from repeated births and deaths. 

# TRADITIONAL TALES

## *Shatamanyu: The Great Sacrificer*

ONCE, there were no rains in a country for two years. Without rains, what could the masses do? They suffered greatly in famine. Even wild plants and meadow grass withered and dried up. People were tormented with no water, even for drinking. Many cattle died. The king was deeply thinking how to alleviate his subjects' suffering. He was anxious to find a solution to the famine.

Therefore, he called a session of his court, and invited the royal guru, all palace officials, scholars, and others. All came to that meeting and started discussing the issue. The royal guru gave a solution to the problem. However, it was not something that could be easily implemented. This was the suggestion of the royal guru: 'Indra is the god of rains. We will have rains only if he is pleased and content. To please Indra, there is no other way than to conduct a human sacrifice.'

Since there was no other recourse, everyone, including the king, had to accept this decision. They fixed a date for the sacrifice. They announced the date of the sacrifice across the country by broadcasting it by drumming. The day of sacrifice came. The capital was teeming with people. The entire country had come to the capital to see that the sacrifice was conducted well and that there were rains and the famine ended. They wanted to know who would come forward to offer oneself for the human sacrifice. They wanted to see the sacrifice.

The time for the human sacrifice neared. The royal guru arose. The eyes of the entire public were fixed on him. They were seeing him unabatedly, eager to hear his words. The royal guru said

to the assembled public: 'Dear people, all of you know that this sacrifice has been arranged for the good of our country. Only if this sacrifice is conducted well, would we have rains and the famine would end. And, human sacrifice is an important part of this sacrifice. Anyone can come forward to offer oneself for this human sacrifice so that this sacrifice can be performed.'

As soon as the royal guru stopped speaking, an eerie silence pervaded the crowd. Everyone was thinking who would come forward to offer oneself in sacrifice. It was alright to do a little sacrifice, but to give up one's life was a great thing. Everyone was standing still in one's place, but none came forward on to the platform of sacrifice, offering one's life. At that moment, a boy's strong voice was heard piercing the stunned silence. Everyone looked at the direction from which the voice came. The boy said: 'I am ready to offer my life for the good of my country. Please offer me and complete the sacrifice. Let that produce rains and let there be good for the country.' It was the twelve-year old Shatamanyu, who said this and proceeded to the sacrificial platform.

Shatamanyu's mother was standing nearby. She said: 'O son! I am now much happier than I was when I gave birth to you.' Saying this, she blessed her son and sent him to the sacrificial platform. Yes, she could have behaved only in this manner as she was a true Indian mother.

Shatamanyu's father was also standing nearby. His son was about to give up his life in front of his eyes! But, he was also unperturbed and blessed his son and sent him for the sacrifice. The assembled people were amazed. A small boy



was voluntarily coming forward to offer his life for the nation! What a wonderful boy! What a wonderful mother! What a wonderful father!

Shatamanyu climbed upon the sacrificial platform. In a few seconds, his head was to roll on the floor! The moment Shatamanyu was about to be sacrificed, a miracle took place. The skies darkened, there appeared clouds after clouds, flashes of lightning came one after the other. There were loud thunders as though mountains were crashing against one another. Then, on the sacrificial platform, took place a miracle. Torrents of rain poured over Shatamanyu. And there appeared Indra, the god of rains.

The public prostrated before Indra, who said to them: 'Shatamanyu came forward to give up his life for the welfare of the people of his country. His sacrificial mind melted my own mind. It

is not right for a nation that has produced children like Shatamanyu to be in famine, without rains. That is why today I accept this sacrifice as completely and well performed, even without a human sacrifice. I am giving sufficient rains.'

India is a holy land that has given birth to people like Shatamanyu, people like the fiery-monk Swami Vivekananda, who grew in this country, moved in this country, and gave life to many more. Indians can feel exceedingly proud about this. But, just like Indians feel proud of them, should not the future generations feel proud of this generation of Indians? Should not Indians live a life of sacrifice for that? Brothers and sisters, one should think in this manner, whenever one reads or hears about great people. This is my prayer to you. All are benefitted because of the goodness of a few.

PB

IMAGE: [HTTP://WWW.TAMILANVEDAS.COM](http://www.TAMILANVEDAS.COM)





# REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,  
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



## **Lectures on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason**

J N Mohanty, Eds. Tara Chatterjee, Sandhya Basu, and Amita Chatterjee

Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 54 Rani Jhansi Road, New Delhi 110055. [www.mrmlonline.com](http://www.mrmlonline.com). 2014. ₹ 495. 261 pp. HB. ISBN 9788121512770.

In his study of the twelve great thinkers and the search for wisdom from Socrates to Nietzsche, *The Philosophical Life*, James Miller says that Kant was 'widely regarded as the greatest philosopher of modern times' and he had 'a capacious mind' reflected in a talent for 'conceptual gymnastics and had labored long and hard to refine the notions that were largely of his own invention: the autonomy of the will and the limits of pure reason' (James Miller, *The Philosophical Life* (London: Oneworld, 2012), 253). In short, the 'search for wisdom' was Kant's primary quest (*The Philosophical Life*, 304).

Mohanty's volume is a timely phenomenon which, we expect, explores the 'quest for wisdom' since it appears after a long period of Kant's classic. The critique now has hermeneutics of a different ethos. Kant's quest exists alongside the 'basic' frame that he calls 'transcendental realism' (78). Besides, as Mohanty says, Kant sometimes called himself as a 'transcendental idealist' as opposed to 'material idealist', or 'empirical idealist' (ibid.). In effect, pure dialectic is a tantalising illusion, *mahamaya*.

Mohanty mentions Kant's 'famous sentence in which he sums up his position, namely, space and time are empirically real, but transcendently ideal' (ibid.). This is a, or rather the, key issue that holds many of the areas of this study. The main frame is 'transcendental' applied to or rather privileged in terms of three areas: *aesthetics*, *logic*, and *analytics*. There is 'a three-fold synthesis'. The final

three chapters, 'Analytic of Principles', 'Principles of Pure Understanding', and finally, 'Concepts of Reflection' complete the text.

It is easy to list the contents, but exasperating to evolve a coherent, cogent, evenly logical account of Kant's basic views. A few conundrums recur in spite of exquisite language, sharp mind, and other related aspects. For instance, mathematics and Kant took a full course in that area. Perhaps, it may give a wider range and reach to his critique. Is it, should we say, possible to bypass or bifurcate the area from the spectrum? Are there related aspects?

If one forgets the niceties, does one truncate the integral thought of Kant? Surprisingly, we learn from Mohanty that there 'is a small group of distinguished mathematicians who are Kantians' and the subjects, algebra and other related ones, are 'synthetic'. Moreover, to put it plainly, they introduce the 'philosophy of mathematics' having 'three groups, whose views are known as *Logicism*, *Formalism* and *Intuitionism*'. And they claim that "the entire mathematics can be built out of logic. Frege, Russell and Whitehead sought to demonstrate this' (27). I like the word 'sought'.

However, the language of philosophy, says Margaret Chatterjee more explicitly, 'cannot be armed at all points like a mathematical treatise'. Moreover, referring specifically to Kant, she adds: 'Kant distrusts examples'. But, 'an example is a parallel strategy which we are supposed to take as throwing light obliquely on the thrust of the argument.' Chatterjee adds: 'Kant's "transcendental aura" ... "needed no support from examples"' (Margaret Chatterjee, *The Language of Philosophy* (Delhi: Allied, 1981), 119–20).

Even here we have to be cautious in interpreting what appear as conceptual constructs, which come in handy but ultimately prove ambiguous. In other words, the enormous quanta of philosophical investigations available now trouble us acutely. For, critiques need to be updated. In the chapter

on 'Concepts of Reflection', we come across formidable blocks: 'If one is a transcendental philosopher and faces the reflective problem, the first question he asks is to what cognitive faculty these concepts belong?' (243). Then we can see what kinds of concepts Kant has in mind. There are 'four pairs of concepts, which determine to his mind Leibnizian metaphysics. These are Identity and Difference, Agreement and Opposition, the Inner and the Outer, and Matter and Form' (ibid.).

One is stuck if we take the situation of philosophy today in general and Kantian thought in particular. And the recurring issue is the 'reality' of concepts temporal and real, empirical and cognitive. As tools, concepts are 'predicates of possible judgments ... concepts are the rules of synthesis [and] concepts are sets of marks' (113). One example is 'intuition' and Kant's view is: 'Intuition is a representation which is *antecedent to any act of thinking*' (43). The author's explanation is: 'If we cannot intuit what we are thinking about, then our thought is to that extent empty, its intention is frustrated' (ibid.). And finally the Kantian view, if I read correctly, is 'intuition ... does not need thought' (ibid.).

Anticipating, I suppose, the ambiguity, Mohanty comes to our rescue: 'We have to remember that for Kant most definitions are real. In nominal definition, we substitute words for words. In real definition we are saying something which belong to the nature of things which are being defined' (195). Identifying the implicit aim of Kant, Mohanty says: 'What Kant wanted was that to have for each pure logical concept or category, a temporalized form, which would be directly applicable to the data or the representations' (196).

Purity or pure are the keys. But as Wittgenstein, with his gentle tenor puts it: 'Taking the area of mathematics—is indeed of the highest certainty—though we only have a crude reflection of it' (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G E M Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 226e).

One gets the feeling in conclusion that Kant's reflections on philosophy are logically original but his life itself was miserably, anguishingly intolerable: Did he realise what Michael Foucault tells us: 'The world after Kant's critique appears as a city to be built, rather than as a cosmos already given.' Contradictory responses marked his work:

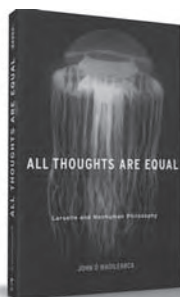
'Many of his students had no idea what he was talking about' and he added in a reply to a correspondent 'I don't understand myself. Such overly refined hairsplitting is no longer for me.' He may have realised that the view that 'thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind' (*The Philosophical Life*, 266, 304).

But then, recent studies show a deeper humanistic dimension. Martha C Nussbaum points to a wider philosophical intervention drawing from Greek and Roman cultures who focus on 'equal respect for the worth of humanity in each and every person— a Stoic idea that exercised great power over Kant, who captured the idea of world citizenship in his doctrine of the "kingdom of ends"' (Martha Nussbaum, *Philosophical Interventions: Reviews 1986–2011*, (Oxford: Oxford University, 2014), 172).

Mohanty's volume is, as everything that he has written or spoken, thorough and makes itself an indispensable *manual* for the study of *Immanuel Kant*. And thanks to his former students who have edited the volume. The only trouble is: absence by and large of relevance to life, in spite of profound dialectics. The basic textual theme is provided by Mohanty. We need to proceed from there.

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Osmania University, Hyderabad



**All Thoughts Are Equal:  
Laruelle and  
Nonhuman Philosophy**  
John Ó Maoilearca

University of Minnesota Press, 111  
Third Avenue South, Suite 290, Min-  
neapolis, MN 55401-2520, USA. [www.  
upress.umn.edu](http://www.upress.umn.edu). 2015. \$30. x + 380 pp.  
PB. ISBN 9780816697359.

Published in the series *Posthumanities*, this book presents the author's attempt to analyse François Laruelle's Non-philosophy. He does this by a non-conventional method, circumventing the orthodox philosophical ways, and following the framework of Lars von Trier's film *The Five Obstructions*. Precisely because of this novel approach, Maoilearca is able to clearly bring out the unique features of Laruelle's thought and the power of nonhuman philosophy. An essential

guide to Laruelle, this volume is accessible even to the novitiate in philosophy.

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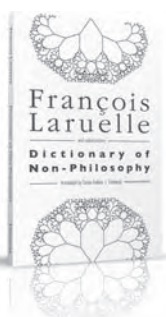
### **Laruelle: Against the Digital**

Alexander R Galloway

University of Minnesota Press, 111 Third Avenue South, Suite 290, Minneapolis, MN 55401-2520, USA. [www.upress.umn.edu](http://www.upress.umn.edu). 2014. \$27.50. xxxvi + 284 pp. PB. ISBN 9780816692132.

Galloway critically examines how François Laruelle's non-standard philosophy subverts the digital question. Clarifying the philosophical nature of the digital concept, Galloway proceeds to show that non-standard philosophy is an attempt to come out of the authoritarian stance that traditional philosophy takes and to show that there could be a non-binary view of things. One of the best introductions to Laruelle, this volume seeks to 'superimpose Laruelle onto digitality, resulting in a new unilateral posture vis-à-vis both digitality and philosophy' and shows that 'Laruelle's non-standard theorization and axiomatization of the philosophical infrastructure may also be applied to the digital infrastructure' (xxxv). A must read for anyone wanting to understand Laruelle.

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### **Dictionary of Non-Philosophy**

François Laruelle

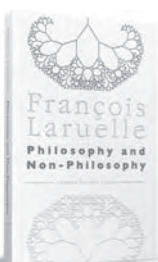
Collaborators: Tony Brachet, Gilbert Kieffer, Laurent Leroy, Daniel Nicolet, Anne-Françoise Schmid, and Serge Valdinoci  
Trans. Taylor Adkins

Univocal Publishing, 123 North 3rd Street, #202, Minneapolis, MN 55401, USA. [www.univocalpublishing.com](http://www.univocalpublishing.com). 2013. \$24.95. 176 pp. PB. ISBN 9781937561130.

François Laruelle's non-standard philosophy adopts an approach that is not just novel but abstruse and not based on anything that philosophy has known till now. That is why it becomes necessary that the concepts are defined and what could be better than the proponent of this

philosophy, Laruelle himself, working to this end. This is one of the several steps in the 'pragmatic translation in the reworking of philosophical language by way of axiomatic generalization' that Laruelle has been doing along with some of his friends (9). This dictionary is, in Laruelle's words, 'a toolbox, no doubt, but where the box itself is a tool, where every tool is inseparable from the box' (20). This dictionary is only a pointer as non-philosophy is against any bindings to traditions and attempts to chart a path for free thinking where 'thinking' itself does not become a shackle.

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### **Philosophy and Non-Philosophy**

François Laruelle

Trans. Taylor Adkins

Univocal Publishing, 123 North 3rd Street, #202, Minneapolis, MN 55401, USA. [www.univocalpublishing.com](http://www.univocalpublishing.com). 2013. \$24.95. 258 pp. PB. ISBN 9781937561123.

François Laruelle's non-standard philosophy is necessary for the survival or popularity of philosophy according to Laruelle: 'Philosophy can only really become "for all" or "popular" by becoming non-philosophy' (cover). Non-philosophy is not no philosophy but a different approach to philosophising where philosophy is not the main thing but the 'real' is. Non-philosophy is not an attempt to know 'about' the real but to see real 'as' it is. A clear and concise introduction to non-philosophy or non-standard thought by Laruelle himself, this volume puts non-philosophy in contradistinction to regular philosophy and 'proposes a new practice of philosophy' (1).

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### **Photo-Fiction, A Non-Standard Aesthetics**

François Laruelle

Trans. Drew S Burk

Univocal Publishing, 123 North 3rd Street, #202, Minneapolis, MN 55401, USA. [www.univocalpublishing.com](http://www.univocalpublishing.com). 2012. \$24.95. 182 pp. PB. ISBN 9781937561116.



François Laruelle's non-standard philosophy seeks to redefine the conventional modes of thinking, not just in the sphere of philosophy but also in the fields of aesthetics, religion, sociology, and other allied disciplines. In this volume, Laruelle questions the 'fiction' of photography by establishing that 'photo-fiction is precisely the passage from an exemplarily modern aesthetics to a contemporary and inventive aesthetics that conjugates the arts and unfolds them onto-vectorially' (38–9). Laruelle questions the very existence of aesthetics and art and proposes 'considering every art form in terms of principles of sufficiency and no longer in terms of descriptive or theoretical or foundational historical perspectives' (3). This bilingual edition with the original French is a reference to help others to apply non-philosophy to other disciplines of humanities.

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### **Introduction to Non-Marxism**

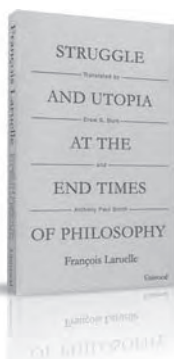
François Laruelle

Trans. Anthony Paul Smith

Univocal Publishing, 123 North 3rd Street, #202, Minneapolis, MN 55401, USA. [www.univocalpublishing.com](http://www.univocalpublishing.com). 2015. \$24.95. 198 pp. PB. ISBN 9781937561239.

Extending his non-philosophical thought to examining possibilities of a redefinition of Marxism, in this volume François Laruelle shows that in the light of the apparent failure of Marxism or communism, we need to explore the '*single cause-of-the-last-instance for this failure*' (12). Another reason for this failure could be, according to Laruelle, that 'Marxism may have "lacked" the Real and tied its fate to the history-world' (23). In this path-breaking and incisive reassessment of Marxism, Laruelle focuses on the real and the determination-in-the-last-instance to find if Marxism itself can be transformed to non-Marxism. The eloquence and sublimity of his thought come forth beautifully in this passage: 'Idealism finds materialism unintelligible because it lacks self-consciousness.' (102). This book is a must read for all concerned with Marxism.

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### **Struggle and Utopia at the End Times of Philosophy**

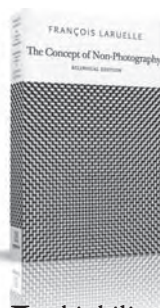
François Laruelle

Trans. Drew S Burk and Anthony Paul Smith

Univocal Publishing, 123 North 3rd Street, #202, Minneapolis, MN 55401, USA. [www.univocalpublishing.com](http://www.univocalpublishing.com). 2012. \$24.95. 254 pp. PB. ISBN 9781937561055.

Through this work, François Laruelle looks at non-philosophers from various angles. He seeks to look at them from a humane perspective and as 'subjects of knowledge' (25). He argues that 'non-philosophy is a close relative of the spiritual but definitely not the spiritualist' (26). Summarising non-philosophy Laruelle explains the three axioms of this thought: the Real, its causality, and the object of this causality. He shows us the urgency to 'first distinguish philosophizability and philosophical effectivity' (108). Cogently building his thesis, Laruelle has produced yet another marvellous work on non-philosophy that is necessary reading for all who want to know this thought.

PB



### **The Concept of Non-Photography**

François Laruelle

Trans. Robin Mackay

Sequence Press, 36 Orchard Street, New York, NY 10002, USA. [www.sequencepress.com](http://www.sequencepress.com). 2015. \$21.95. xvi + 286 pp. PB. ISBN 9780983216919.

In this bilingual edition with the original French, François Laruelle envisions a discipline of non-photography by concentrating on what photography *is* and not what it *becomes*. He emphasises the immanence of photography as opposed to its externality. Laruelle envisions a synthesis of the modern and the postmodern through a generalisation of the 'fractal' in photography. This volume is important in that it helps one understand the principles and techniques to be applied for practising non-philosophy.

PB





***From Decision to Heresy:  
Experiments in  
Non-Standard Thought***

François Laruelle  
Ed. Robin Mackay

Sequence Press, 36 Orchard Street,  
New York, NY 10002, USA. [www.sequencepress.com](http://www.sequencepress.com). 2012. \$27.95. xvi +  
496 pp. PB. ISBN 9780983216902.

This book is a collection of the English translations of François Laruelle's writings, mainly from the first two stages of the five-stage development of his thought of non-philosophy. The tone of the book is set by the wonderful introduction by the editor, Robin Mackay, who brings out the dissatisfaction of Laruelle that propelled him to rethink philosophy and propound a new thought, that of non-philosophy. The introduction is interspersed with quotations from a conversation with Laruelle, which bring out his insights. Here, we see Laruelle describing the gradual growth of his thought and how his 'critique is a critique of all possible philosophy' (9). This volume showcases Laruelle's literary talents as well, as we have different forms of writing, including some poems. This book is a reference for anyone interested in the history of the development of non-philosophy.

PB



***Christo-Fiction: The Ruins of  
Athens and Jerusalem***

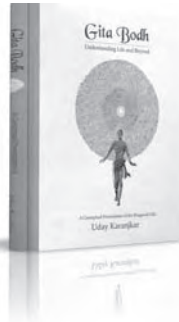
François Laruelle  
Trans. Robin Mackay

Columbia University Press, 61 West  
62 Street, New York, NY 10023, USA.  
[www.cup.columbia.edu](http://www.cup.columbia.edu). 2015. \$35. xviii  
+ 276 pp. PB. ISBN 9780231167246.

François Laruelle calls this book a 'faith experiment' (xi) and presents the problem that led to such an experiment: 'The war of religion continues, and there will be no Christian return of Christ. If Christianity is the religion of the exit from religions, Christ is the exit from Christianity itself' (ix). He proceeds to apply the 'Algebra of the Messianic Wave' (103) to bring about a 'transformation of theology and the production of a christo-fiction that replaces the "return of Christ"

as object of belief"' (112). Through this work, Laruelle tries to find 'new relations between religion, science, politics, and art' (blurb). He seeks a more humane Christ as opposed to the authoritarian figure propagated by academic theology. His Christ is human and he establishes that the science of Christ is the same as non-philosophy, free from any preconditioning. Listing the new 'tasks ... prescribed by this placing of Christ's message into the gnostic matrix' (xiv), Laruelle mentions the following, among others: 'To reinterpret the distinction between belief and faith ... To rename this whole set of axioms as being those of a gnostic but nonreligious usage of Christ, of his kerygma and of his faithful' (xv). Representing a major rethinking of theology and the philosophy of religion, this book is a good resource for anyone interested in religion.

PB



***Gita Bodh: Understanding  
Life and Beyond—  
A Conceptual Presentation of  
the Bhagavad Gītā***

Uday Karanjkar

Uday Karanjkar, Flat C-9, 'Pinnac  
Memories', Phase 1, Kothrud, Pune  
411038. Email: [uday.gitabodh@gmail.com](mailto:uday.gitabodh@gmail.com). 2015. ₹ 1,599. 546 pp. HB. ISBN  
979352359394.

This book is, in every sense of the word, a remarkable achievement which embodies in its content every aspect of Bhagavadgita's teachings. If Gita teaches bhakti, jnana, karma, and other yogas, the spirit of those yogas is evident in every section, every paragraph of this stunningly beautiful book. Devotion, intense knowledge, and impeccable activism in executing the task and above all a comprehensive, flawless execution in producing the outcome—what are these except values of the text itself! In short, it is a radiant replica brought out of the crystallisation the author absorbed from above all, his guru Swami Satswarupananda, a disciple of the late Swami Dayananda Saraswati, the founder of Arsha Vidya Pitham.

This does not exhaust the uniqueness of this volume. With his experience as a corporate leader

for thirty-seven years, Karanjkar brought a transformative ambience to the content and production of the volume. If Gita is the product of a crisis of faith—in the very presence of the Lord—his message is much more needed now. In the ambience of the cosmos and the inescapable chaos surrounding it we require not only a message like the Gita, but also an adaptation of the text to the tastes and tempers of the ethos in which we live. The very format and the content reflect the existing ethos.

The author's uncanny precision in language is in tune with the brevity of our contemporary trends of writing and publishing. And, above all, it is reader-friendly. Before I go further, this volume's contents hinge on the dual textual logic prevalent today. Particularly, and perhaps instinctively, Karanjkar introduced into the production of the book the captivatingly visual texts to illustrate the simple, expressively rich words. In short, the eye is enchanted which keep our 'I' alert to the profound insights into the art of integral living in a world which has irrevocably turned global and complex.

The Gita, in the format in which it has appeared, therefore is not one of those tracts which instantly create not only aesthetic headaches but also the verbal paradoxes, pompously hiding or bypassing the crucial content. For instance, to cite a few examples: we have the troublesome and temperamental 'I' accredited with three 'wants': 'I want an infinitely and permanently happy me! ... I want an immortal me! ... I want an all-knowing me!' (98). All imbued with exclamation marks. In short, the Gita threadbare shows the trouble with 'desire' for perennial happiness: permanent, infinite, immortal. And the colourful spaces—the beautifully rounded, balanced colourful spaces in which the 'I' owner is shown so exultantly that one need not study what is maya! We are products of maya.

About *jivanmukti*, liberation-in-life, Karanjkar says in his enchantingly simple language: 'Just as a seed is completely burnt in fire and cannot sprout again, all the karmas of a *jivanmuktaḥ* are completely burnt by the fire of *Atmajñāna*. Having burnt, they cannot produce any *Karmaphala*' (285). So many linguistic items condensed into a visual which shows the burning as also the energetic running away of the liberated one. The verbal exemplifies alongside the visionary depth, call we call it?

Uday Karanjkar seems to follow the *Gita* of our times: Sri Ramakrishna, who condensed the essence of Gita, as *tyagi*, renunciation, emphasised the indispensable quality of mind for knowing God as: 'Unless you are simple you cannot know God, the simple One.' And, the God here is also Sri Krishna, whose essence is integral to the Gita text. Perhaps, the author's comprehensive aim, for instance, is found in the very beginning.

This is a 'concept by concept presentation of the knowledge revealed in the *Gītā* in a smooth, logical sequence, unfolding the whole vision and leading to a clear understanding and conclusion' (11). And captivating 'beautiful illustrations, simple stories and examples' (ibid.) highlight the content effortlessly. And Karanjkar draws, as a man of contemporary science and technology, chooses everyday items for, in one case, to yoga-*shastra*.

To explain Yoga-*shastras* 'Correcting My [Our] Direction While Driving' (310), he gives the following features of amazing inter-thematic transformation: Driving a two-wheeler is the source. And the identical skills of yoga are comparable: 'Validating—for checking the direction and finding the correction (e.g. Viveka ... Controlling—like applying a brake to replace momentum and speed in the wrong direction (e.g., Basic values) ... Correcting—like steering to correct the direction (e.g. Āstikya... Śravaṇa ... Manana ... ) ... Elevating—like an accelerator to accelerate in the right direction (e.g. Dhyānayoga ... Nididhyāsana ... )' (310). The equivalent Sanskrit terms in Devanagari have also been added.

This review does not need and even cannot comprehensively cover the nuggets of practical Gita lessons. It is comprehensive explaining in familiar techniques of exposition, and, above all, using contemporary scientific and technological apparatus to achieve one of the most difficult jobs: alert *mindfulness*. In short, Uday Karanjkar has blazed a new trail of technology/spirituality as also the mental/scientific in harmony of mutual help. Dip into it when, God forbid, you feel depressed: it is instant intoxicating experience. The threatening blues are blasted—the book is seeker friendly.

Prof. M Sivaramkrishna

Former Chair, Department of English  
Osmania University, Hyderabad

# MANANA

**Exploring thought-currents from around the world.  
Extracts from a thought-provoking book every month.**

## **Toleration**

Andrew Jason Cohen

Polity Press, 65 Bridge Street, Cambridge CB2 1UR,  
UK. 2014. 176 pp. \$59.95. HB. ISBN 9780745655567.

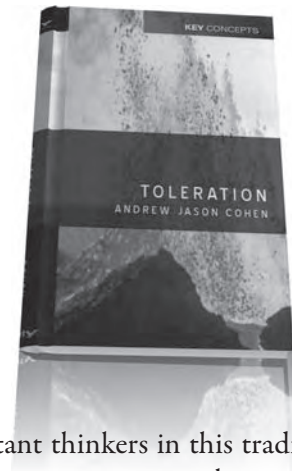
IN THIS BOOK, I am to provide a clear and lively introduction to the issues surrounding toleration. Debates about toleration have revolved around three issues. What is toleration? Should we tolerate and, if so, why? What should be tolerated? These questions are of central importance to moral and political thought. The last two are especially prominent in debates about how people should behave and how institutions should be arranged. They are the questions that motivate classical liberals like John Locke, Adam Smith, and John Stuart Mill. They thus also affect the work of all their intellectual descendants, ranging from contemporary welfare liberals like John Rawls to contemporary libertarian thinkers like Robert Nozick. Even the works of contemporary socialist thinkers like G A Cohen speak, though less directly, to these questions.

It is no exaggeration to say that the history of liberalism is the modern history of toleration. It was the first classical liberals—perhaps most notably John Locke—who argued for significant limits to the power of the state to interfere with its citizens. This was part of a shift in thinking about people living under a regime as *citizens* rather than as *subjects*. As citizens, their lives were up to them and their choices—within some limits—had to be tolerated. I will not offer historical analysis or attempt to fully explain the

most important thinkers in this tradition. Instead, I will concentrate on explicating the best answers to the central questions of toleration. While this will involve looking to historical thinkers along the way, the focus is on offering the best view.

This book is not likely what you are expecting. To use a phrase, this isn't your Mom's introduction to toleration. Toleration is an often misunderstood word—or, perhaps putting the same point differently, it is used in many ways without its users recognising this. To begin, as I use the term, toleration is a behavior. If I want to refer to the related attitude (or virtue), I will talk of *tolerance*. But here's an interesting point: as we use the terms today, an extremely tolerant person can't tolerate very much. This is not to say that they seek to interfere in lots of other people's activities. It's to say that their lack of interference is not toleration. To tolerate, as we will see below, requires that one oppose that with which one does not interfere. This may be initially confusing.

This book may be different from what you would expect for a second, more important reason: as the author, I will not refrain from making judgements. As the reader, you will decide for yourself if my being judgemental is a problem. That is not my concern. I am concerned to help you understand and appreciate the idea




and practice of toleration. And importantly, advocating toleration does not mean advocating some wishy-washy namby-pamby way of being that requires you to refrain from judging others. Why this is the case should be clear from what I said above: if you oppose nothing, you cannot tolerate anything. Those of us who oppose things—those of us who are judgemental, i.e., *willing to judge*—can tolerate things. Toleration, as we shall soon see, is *the intentional and principled refraining from interfering with another whom one opposes*. It is my hope that you believe or will come to believe that we should frequently tolerate others—not because we love, approve of, or even like them, but because we recognize that in a world where people oppose each other, toleration is a good thing. At least it's a better world than one in which we oppose others and don't tolerate.

So, a word of warning. We often want to express our openness to, or respect for, other cultures. That is, we want to be—and to be perceived as—tolerant. So, we might say things like 'Well, it's not for me (or us) to judge', or 'If they are OK with it, my view doesn't matter'. However, a real commitment to toleration excludes any such relativist stance. To be committed to toleration requires believing that toleration is a good thing and that *that* claim is not itself relative. We don't, I assume, want to say 'Well, since I think (or my community or culture thinks) toleration is a value, I won't judge anyone else—but, of course, that's relative to us, and if people in another culture don't accept it, they needn't tolerate us'. Toleration *is* a value; we *should* tolerate others and they *should* tolerate us. Moreover, there is an important difference between respecting a person (or culture) and respecting their beliefs.

Respecting someone does not require respecting his or her views. Showing respect for

the person may even require that we challenge them (politely) when they hold views that are or seem unsupportable. While it's likely true that 'they have a *right* to believe whatever they want', that does not mean that whatever they believe *is right*. Having a right to an opinion does not mean the opinion is right any more than having a right to property makes one rich—and we should not pretend otherwise. We should assume the people we meet are intelligent and worthy of our respect, but we should not be surprised to find that sometimes they hold *views* we cannot respect (we should still respect *the person*). There are good reasons why people—including very smart people—sometimes hold false views. (I hold several views that many people, some smarter than I, think are wrong. *You* may end up thinking I am wrong about a number of issues as you read what follows). We can respect others, not respect their views, and tolerate their holding of false views. In fact, it would be decidedly *lacking respect* not to challenge at least some mistaken beliefs—it would be like saying, 'Well, that person is worthless anyway, so I don't care what falsehoods they believe'. Rationally dialoguing with another shows respect—and is fully consistent with toleration. By the end of this book, I hope, you will be able to rationally defend your own view about what should be tolerated and why. (I also hope you will think my view basically right and so think we should tolerate very much more than we currently do—but that is a lot to expect).

A final introductory note to those who think being judgemental is necessarily bad: the very idea that we should not judge others seems to me very odd. Persons are rationally autonomous beings. As rational beings, we tend to evaluate things as we are exposed to them—at least the things that stand out to us (for whatever reason). That is what rational beings do. 



# REPORTS

## ***New Mission Sub-Centre***

A sub-centre of **Ramakrishna Mission, Bhubaneswar**, has been started in **Cuttack** under the name '**Ramakrishna Mission, Cuttack**' with the land and buildings received from Sri Ramakrishna Vivekananda Bhava Prachar Samiti, Cuttack. Its address is 'Ramakrishna Mission, Mata Math, Ring Road, Cuttack, Odisha 753001', phone: (0671) 2305300, and email: <cuttack@rkmm.org>. The sub-centre was inaugurated on 9 November 2016, the sacred Jagaddhatri Puja day.

## ***Celebration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Swami Abhedanandaji Maharaj***

**Swamiji's Ancestral House** held a special programme at Sibpur, Howrah, on 27 September 2016 which was attended by about 300 people.

**Delhi** centre held a discourse on Swami Abhedanandaji on 6 November which was attended by 180 devotees.

## ***Values Education and Youth Programmes***

**Haripad Math** conducted two values education camps on 28 and 29 September in which 360 young people took part.

On 16 and 17 September, **Khetri** centre, in collaboration with Delhi centre, conducted a 'Teachers' Training programme at Jhunjhunu town on values education. In all, 74 teachers of 38 government schools of Jhunjhunu district took part in the programme.

**Ranchi Morabadi** centre conducted a training programme on rural development for youths from 16 to 30 October, in which 46 people took part.

**Silchar Ashrama** conducted two youth conferences on 30 September and 1 October in



*Inauguration of Ramakrishna Sevamandira, Tenkalamole*

which 880 students and 104 teachers from 65 schools and colleges participated.

**Vadodara** centre held a programme on 15 October which was attended by 200 students.

## ***Swachchha Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Campaign)***

**Almora** centre has taken up cleaning of nearly one kilometer stretch of a public road in Almora every Sunday with the help of local people.

**Coimbatore Mission** centre conducted, through its different educational institutions, 13 cleaning drives on 3 October in which 746 students cleaned public roads and premises of several government offices.

**Kochi** centre distributed 50 saplings and held a talk on 16 October.

The third phase of Swachchha Mangaluru, a cleanliness drive of **Mangaluru Ashrama**, was launched in a programme followed by a seminar on 2 October, about 2,000 volunteers took part. The centre conducted 32 cleaning drives in different areas of Mangaluru on 9, 16, and 23 October in which about 3,000 volunteers participated.

**Ranchi Morabadi** centre held a special programme of oath-taking, planting of saplings, and a transect walk on 22 October at Baridhi village in Ranchi district to create cleanliness awareness. Sri Sudarshan Bhagat, Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India, and other dignitaries attended the programme.

**Vadodara** centre conducted two cleanliness drives in Vadodara and a village in Vadodara district on 2 October. On the same day about 90 sweepers of Vadodara municipality were felicitated.

### News of Branch Centres

The newly installed lift at **Advaita Ashrama, Varanasi** was inaugurated on 28 October.

Dr Raman Singh, chief minister of Chhattisgarh, declared open the auditorium-cum-indoor stadium at **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narainpur** on 2 November. Swami Suhitananda, then General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, presided over the programme which was attended by many dignitaries. On the same day, Swami Suhitanandaji inaugurated the monks' quarters and a hostel building.

Srimat Swami Prabhanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated the office block at **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Patna** on 5 November.

The Sri Sharada Bhavana, a multipurpose hall, at **Ramakrishna Mission, Shivanahalli** was declared open on 7 November.

Srimat Swami Prabhanandaji Maharaj, inaugurated the monks' quarters building at **Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Medinipur** on 13 November, the birthday of Swami Vijnananandaji Maharaj.

The refurbished auditorium at **Ramakrishna Math, Baranagar** was inaugurated on 26 November.

Ramakrishna Sevamandira, the rural welfare unit of **Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mysuru** at Tenkalamole in Chamarajanagar district, was inaugurated on 26 November.

### Relief

**Winter Relief:** 9,998 blankets were distributed to poor people through the following centres: **Allahabad:** 428, on 13 October and 18 December 2016; **Bamunmura:** 500, on 7 to 21 November; **Barasat:** 312, from 14 November to 4 December; **Barisha:** 300, on 20 December; **Bhopal:** 300, from 19 to 22 November; **Chandipur:** 275, from 14 November to 18 December; **Chapra:** 1,000,

from 14 November to 4 December; **Cuttack (Bhubaneswar):** 200, on 9 November; **Guwahati:** 300, from 1 to 15 December; **Jalpaiguri:** 300, on 25 December; **Jammu:** 272, from 12 to 26 December; **Khetri:** 50, on 25 December; **Muzaffarpur:** 200, on 18 December; **Narottam Nagar:** 1,219, from 2 November to 24 December; **Ponnampet:** 333, in November and December; **Purulia:** 300, from 21 November to 22 December; **Rahara:** 874, on 20 December; **Ranchi Morabadi:** 400, from 21 October to 29 November; **Saradapitha, Belur:** 300, from 8 to 14 December; **Sikra Kulingram:** 300, from 1 November to 15 December; **Silchar:** 500, from 20 to 27 November; **Swamiji's Ancestral House:** 300, from 2 to 17 December; **Tamluk:** 700, from 17 November to 8 December; **Vadodara:** 35, on 12 December; **Varanasi Home of Service:** 300, on 11 and 18 December.

Besides, the following centres distributed various winter garments, mentioned against their names, to needy people: **Allahabad:** 992 sweaters from 13 October to 14 December. **Bhopal:** 618 sweatshirts and 400 mufflers from 29 November to 12 December. **Chandipur:** 49 mufflers on 8 and 14 December. **Chapra:** 960 jackets from 21 November to 5 December. **Indore:** 35 coats on 27 November. **Jamtara:** 255 sweaters from 8 October to 11 November. **Kanpur:** 1,015 sweaters from 6 to 16 October. **Khetri:** 1,005 sweaters on 12 December. **Lalgarh:** 1,992 sweaters, 1,016 sweatshirts, and 1,000 jackets from 7 September to 20 December. **Malda:** 465 sweaters in November and December. **Naora:** 1,730 sweatshirts, 158 sweaters, 625 jackets, and 1,000 mufflers from 18 November to 12 December. **Narottam Nagar:** 771 sweaters and 100 sweatshirts from 27 November to 21 December. **Purulia:** 550 sweaters from 7 November to 22 December. **Rahara:** 14 sweaters on 20 December. **Sikra Kulingram:** 40 shawls in November. **Tamluk:** 512 sweaters, 611 jackets, and 205 mufflers from 26 November to 8 December. 

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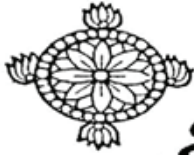
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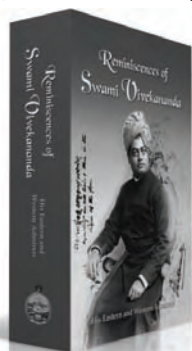


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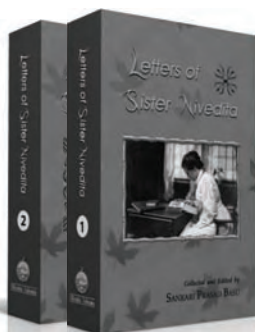
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*We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran; yet this has to be done by harmonising the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran.*

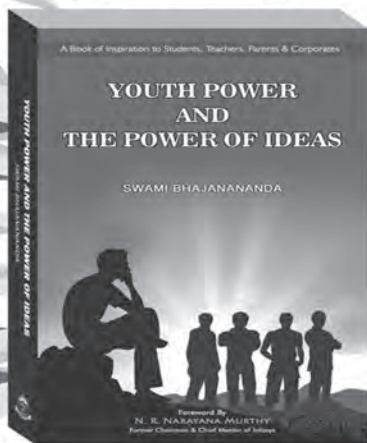
*Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of THE RELIGION, which is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best.*

*Swami Vivekananda*



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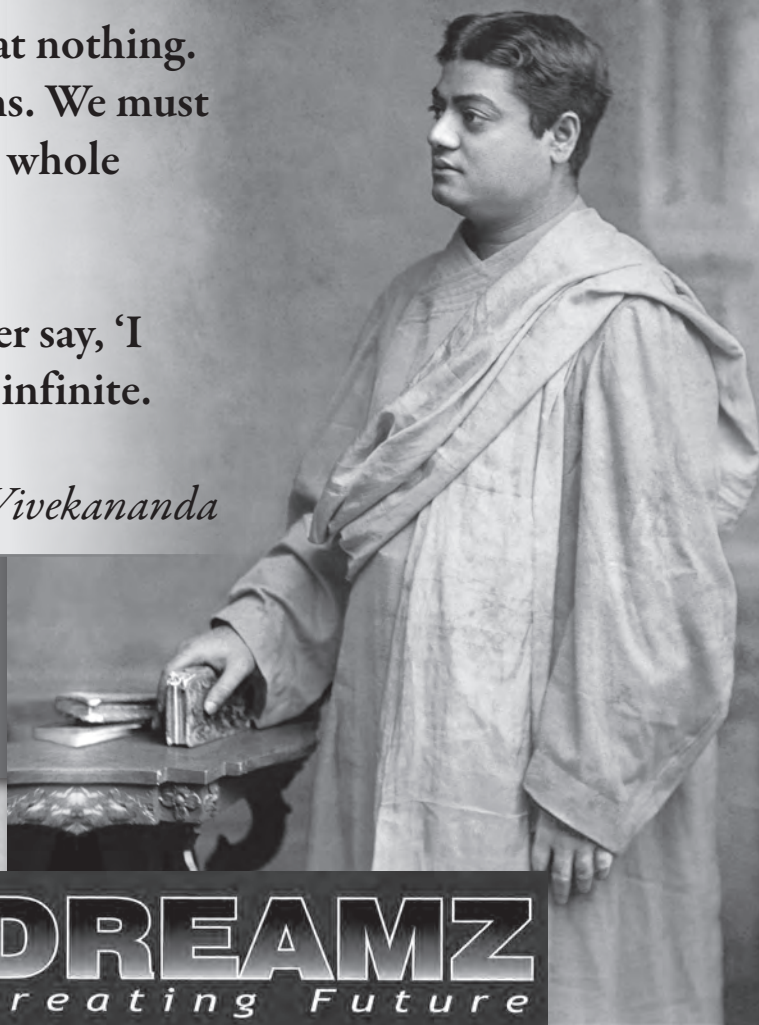
Each soul is potentially divine.  
The goal is to manifest this  
Divinity within.

Strength is life, weakness is  
death.

Fear nothing, stop at nothing.  
You will be like lions. We must  
rouse India and the whole  
world.

Never say, 'No', never say, 'I  
cannot', for you are infinite.

—*Swami Vivekananda*



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This is my heartfelt prayer.

Yours in the lord

**Swami Sarvatmananda**  
Secretary

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In religion, as in all other matters,  
discard everything that weakens  
you, have nothing to do with it.

—Swami Vivekananda

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